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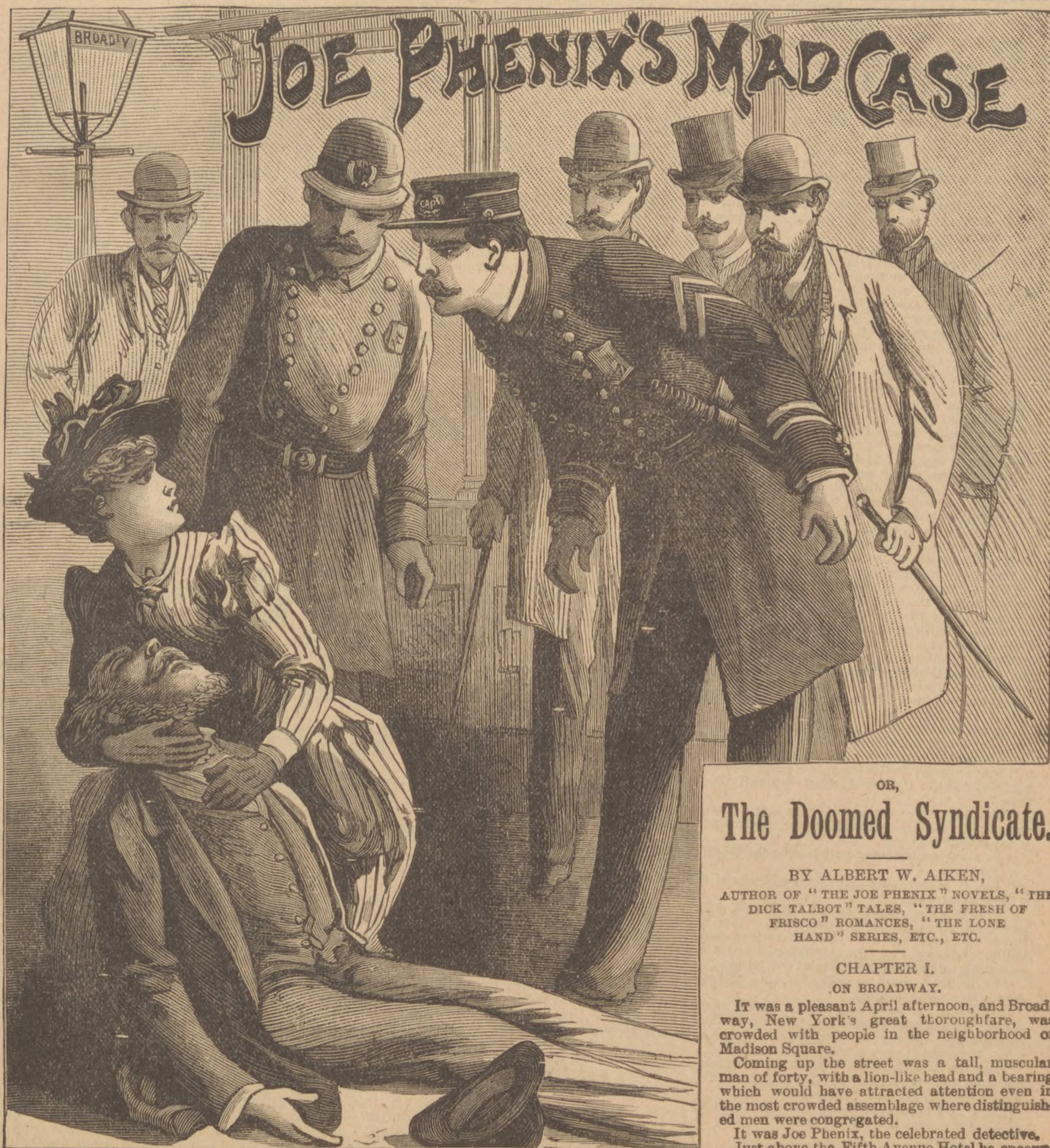
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OR, The Doomed Syndicate.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,
AUTHOR OF "THE JOE PHENIX" NOVELS, "THE
DICK TALBOT" TALES, "THE FRESH OF
FRISCO" ROMANCES, "THE LONE
HAND" SERIES, ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

ON BROADWAY.

It was a pleasant April afternoon, and Broadway, New York's great thoroughfare, was crowded with people in the neighborhood of Madison Square.

Coming up the street was a tall, muscular man of forty, with a lion-like head and a bearing which would have attracted attention even in the most crowded assemblage where distinguished men were congregated.

It was Joe Phenix, the celebrated detective. Just above the Fifth Avenue Hotel he encountered a tall, good-looking, although rather masculine-appearing girl.

"WHAT IS IT OFFICER?" THE POLICE CAPTAIN ASKED AS HE BENT OVER THE PROSTRATE MAN; "A MURDER?" AND HE LOOKED INQUIRINGLY AT THE ACTRESS DETECTIVE.

She was richly dressed in a dark, costly "tailor-made" suit, and came swinging along the street with the light and springy steps which told of perfect health.

The keen, gray-blue eyes, the resolute mouth, square-set chin and the odd-colored yellow hair would have revealed to any reader of the Joe Phenix series of novels that this was the veteran detective's favorite aid, the famous actress-detective, Mignon Lawrence.

A bright smile appeared on her face as she caught sight of the indefatigable man-hunter, and as they came near to each other she advanced with outstretched hand.

"How d'y' do?" Mignon exclaimed, as she shook hands with the detective.

She was too acute to mention his name aloud in a crowded street.

"I'm very well, thank you," Joe Phenix replied.

"And there isn't any need for me to put the question to you," he continued, "for I can see by your face that you are in perfect health."

"Oh, yes, I was never better in all my life, and all that troubles me is that I do not get enough to do."

Joe Phenix smiled.

"Yours is not a common complaint," he remarked. "With the majority of people in this world the less work they have the better they like it."

"Ah, yes, I presume that is true, but it is not the case with me," she rejoined. "I like to work and am never so happy as when I have plenty to do. You see I am a firm believer in the old saying that work is the salt which gives savor to life."

"Well, I must admit that I agree with you in regard to that," the detective observed. "When I haven't anything to do I find that time hangs extremely heavy on my hands."

"I am quite sure that it does on mine, although as I have plenty of money I ought, in theory, to enjoy myself splendidly, but I do not in reality."

"Each morning I anxiously await the post-man's ring, hoping to receive a letter in your well-known hand, saying: 'Dear Mignon, I have a difficult case that I wish you to undertake. Come at once.'"

Again Joe Phenix smiled.

"I am sorry that I have not been able to gratify you by such a summons, but the truth is that business has been extremely quiet for the last two or three months," the veteran detective explained. "I have hardly done enough to pay the running expenses of the office; nothing has come in my way but little petty cases, not amounting to anything. No big ones—no mysteries which require the acute detective talents of a woman like yourself to unravel."

"Ah, come now; no taffy, you know," the girl exclaimed in a coquettish way.

"Oh, no, it is 'honest Injun' every time!" the gentleman declared. "You have really wonderful talents in the detective line and have certainly done some excellent work."

"Well, it would be foolish for me not to admit that I am well-satisfied with my success so far, but I want more to do—I want to be busy all the time. One or two cases a year does not satisfy me, and if the world continues to keep on in this uninteresting, moral way, I shall have to go back to acting again in order to keep alive."

"By the way, I saw you at the Paragon Theater last night," the detective observed, abruptly.

"Yes, and I saw you," the actress-detective returned. "Sitting in a stage box, as I did, I commanded a view of the entire audience, and I spotted you as soon as you came down the parquette. I would have bowed after you took your seat were it not for the fact that you sat next to a man whom I mortally despise, and I was afraid that if I bowed to you he would be impudent enough to believe it was for him, and as I had trouble enough to get rid of him in the West I don't want to be annoyed by him now."

"Do you mean Doffheimer, this great western speculator?" the detective asked evidently surprised.

"Yes, he is the man, and if there is any one in the world that I thoroughly despise, Doffheimer is the man."

"You were acquainted with him in the West?"

"Yes."

"This is rather odd," Joe Phenix observed in a thoughtful way.

"I think I had better have a little talk with you about this matter," he continued. "And as this is no place for an extended conversation, will you honor me by taking a dish of ice-cream, so we can talk the matter over at our leisure?"

"Certainly I shall be delighted," the actress-detective replied, promptly.

"There is an ice-cream parlor on the block above; we can take a table in a quiet corner and canvass this matter thoroughly, for since you know the man, it may amount to something."

Then the detective offered his arm to Mignon, and the two proceeded to the popular resort which Joe Phenix had mentioned.

After they were seated at a table in the rear of the room, and the cream was served, the detective began:

"After I occupied my seat you looked in my direction, and Doffheimer, who sat on my left

hand, immediately jumped to the conclusion that I had the pleasure of your acquaintance, for he turned to me and said: 'Do you know Miss Lawrence?'

"By the way, I neglected to say that I made the man's acquaintance through a piece of detective work which I did for a mining company in which he is interested."

"Yes, he has made all his money in the mining business, but more, I understand, from speculating in mines than by being interested in the practical workings of them," Mignon remarked.

"I really know very little about the man, except that he bears the reputation of being a smart and rather unscrupulous speculator, who has 'cleaned up' a million or two of dollars in the last five years by some bold and gigantic operations in Colorado mines."

"But in regard to his wealth I never take much stock, you understand, in what the common talk of the street says in regard to a man of this kind," the detective explained. "For if one of these speculators is lucky enough to make forty or fifty thousand dollars, the world immediately begins to talk about his millions if he begins to splurge a bit."

"I rather think, from what I know of him, that he has got a good deal of money; he had that reputation at any rate in Colorado, but, as you say, there may be more talk than money," Mignon observed, reflectively.

"When he asked concerning you I replied that I did have the pleasure of your acquaintance, and then he explained that he had seen you act in the West and admired you very much."

"Yes, he annoyed me considerably at one time by his attentions!" the girl exclaimed, her lip curling in scorn.

"He wanted to know where you were acting now, and when I told him that I believed you had retired from the stage he immediately asked if you had married some wealthy man, who had taken you off the 'boards,' for he observed that judging from the display of diamonds which you made, you were not suffering materially for the good things of this life."

"Yes, that remark is like the man; he is one of the kind who has the impression that money can buy everything!" Mignon declared, contemptuously.

"I replied that you had no husband, but had inherited considerable money from your father, I believed."

Then he became quite confidential; repeated his remark about seeing you in the West, and went on to say that he had never seen any woman who had made so deep an impression on him as yourself, and wound up by declaring that although he was a man who had made his stake, and was worth a deal of money, with as good a prospect of taking rank among the big money kings of America as any speculator in the country, yet he would be glad to marry you tomorrow if you would have him, despite the fact that you had been a burlesque actress, who had not scrupled to display your shapely limbs in tights."

"Oh, yes, of course, and that is a terrible objection!" Mignon exclaimed with a contemptuous curl of her firm lips.

"It is all right for the society girl to go to the public ball and exhibit herself in a dress which few actresses would dare to wear upon the stage, or on the bathing beach, at the fashionable watering place, to parade up and down in the broad daylight in a scanty garb which displays every line and curve of her form, but it is a terrible thing for the actress to wear tights upon the stage!"

"Strange there should such a difference be, 'Twixt tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee,"

the veteran detective quoted.

"That is it exactly!" the girl exclaimed.

"Well, to come to the point of my story, the man made the mistake of thinking I was one of the kind of detectives who was ready and willing to do almost anything for money, and he said that if I could arrange a match between him and yourself he would be glad to pay me a good, big commission."

"Ah, yes, that is the man to a dot!" the actress-detective exclaimed.

"He is one of those fellows who, because they worship money themselves, think everybody else is in the same boat!" she continued.

"He is a firm believer that the venal, intriguing statesmen spoke the truth when he declared that every man had his price, and there wasn't a soul in the world who couldn't be bought if you bid high enough or offered the proper inducement!"

"I astonished the man by declining his offer, telling him that it was entirely out of my line, and that he had better apply to some of the matrimonial agents who made a living by duping 'suckers,' to use the vulgar."

Mignon burst into a hearty laugh.

"How astonished he must have been!" she exclaimed.

CHAPTER II. MIGNON'S LOVER.

JOE PHENIX laid back in his chair and indulged in a quiet laugh.

"He was astonished, and he did not relish my plain speaking in the least," the detective went on to explain.

"In fact, he got rather angry," Joe Phenix continued.

"You see he thought I didn't believe he was in earnest, and so he took pains to assure me that he meant every word he said, and in that peculiar blustering way he has, he said, 'My dear fellow, you mustn't think that I am trying to guy you, for I am not. I am in dead earnest, and you never met a man in your life who had his heart more set on a thing than mine is on this. I am a rich man, in fact, I really have more money than I know what to do with, and I am dead stuck on this girl.' He is not particular in regard to his language, you see, Mignon."

"He is a low-minded, ignorant brute!" the girl exclaimed, the color rising in her face. "And I don't care how much money he has! He will never be anything else if he makes fifty millions!"

"You are right about that," Joe Phenix assented.

"Money doesn't change the nature of such a man as this Doffheimer."

"He is of the brute type, and when such a fellow acquires wealth, all the difference it makes is that he tries to put on a polish, and appear like a gentleman, just as he pulls a white shirt on over the common red one that he has been accustomed to wearing, but the flannel garment is there all the same, and the change of fortune does not change the man."

"You are certainly correct as far as this one particular man is concerned; I am sure of that from my own knowledge," Mignon remarked.

"Then he went on to explain that he was one of the kind of fellows that did not care a snap for money when he took a notion into his head, and went to considerable pains to assure me that if he was certain he could win you for his wife by expending ten thousand dollars he would draw a check for the money without a moment's hesitation."

"Well, well!" exclaimed Mignon in amazement, "the man has certainly got a bad attack!"

"Oh, yes, it is a desperate case."

"You, Mr. Phenix, know how I am situated, although this man does not," the girl observed. "You are aware that I am independently wealthy—that I have more money than I can ever possibly spend, unless I am foolish enough to throw it away, so that his supposed wealth would not dazzle me. But if I was differently situated—if I was only a poor actress, without a friend in the world to whom I could turn for assistance in the hour of need, absolutely dependent upon my daily labor for my bread, then this man's offer would not be any temptation, for I am sure I would far rather die than go through life tied to such a wretch!"

And from the emphatic way in which she spoke, as well as her flashing eyes, and heightened color, it was plain she was thoroughly in earnest.

"Well, I think you are correct in taking this view of the matter, for I cannot imagine any more galling slavery than for a woman to be bound to a man whom she despises," Joe Phenix remarked.

"From the way in which he spoke I got the idea that he was not personally acquainted with you," the detective continued. "I thought he had taken a fancy from seeing you on the stage, but from what I knew of your character I felt satisfied he was not the kind of man to suit you."

"Oh, no, no!" Mignon cried, quickly, and with an extremely emphatic shake of the head.

"I couldn't very well tell him that, you know," Joe Phenix observed with a smile, in which the actress-detective joined.

"In the first place it would not be polite, and in the second, it would suggest that I possessed an intimate knowledge of you, a fact which it is extremely necessary for us to keep quiet, if you are to be associated with me in any detective work, for if the world at large understood that you were one of my specials, half your value would be destroyed."

"Oh, yes, I comprehend that!" Mignon exclaimed. "I comprehend how necessary it is for a woman in my position to keep in the background."

"But I did take the trouble to explain to him that you had inherited a large fortune from your father, and were perfectly independent, as far as money could make you. I did not believe that if he was prepared to spend fifty thousand dollars, in place of ten, it would aid him in the least."

"That must have been considerable of a damper."

"Oh, yes, it was, most decidedly so, and he was angered, and retorted that he did not believe I knew as much about women as I supposed, and he thought that as I was in the detective line, I was not wise to reject a commission which would be apt to bring me a good bit of money."

"To this I made answer that I was certain I knew my own business a deal better than he did, and that the job he proposed was not at all in my line, and that, as I said before, one of the

advertising matrimonial agents was the fellow for his money.

"The curtain went up just then, and that put an end to the conversation.

"I only remained until the end of the first act, for then a message came for me, and I was obliged to depart, so the man did not have a chance to say anything more to me on the subject, even if he had so desired."

"It is not likely that he would have troubled you again about the matter after receiving such a rebuff," Mignon suggested.

"I don't hardly think the fellow would have reopened the subject, although he is one of the kind of men who depend a good deal upon their 'nerve,' and are seldom content to take no for an answer.

"I have explained this matter, for it is evident to me that he has made up his mind to pay you attentions just as soon as he can succeed in finding out how to get at you, and I thought you might as well know what was in the wind so as to be on your guard."

"Oh, yes, it was very wise indeed, and very kind, for you to go to the trouble of warning me, and I am ever so much obliged to you," Mignon observed. "But as far as this man is concerned, I really wonder at his cheek, to use plain, common language, for he ought to have understood long ago that a girl about my size had no use for him, as the boys say."

"Now, then, Mr. Phenix, just listen while I tell you the story of my acquaintance with this man," she continued.

"And then, I think, you will have a good idea of his character," she added.

"I imagine I know what sort of a man he is pretty well now," the detective remarked in his quiet way.

"But go ahead, for it will be wise for me to learn all I can about him, as I fancy the man is just bull-headed enough to attempt to annoy you; and although I must admit that in all my experience I am sure that I never met a woman who was half as capable of taking care of herself as you are, yet if this fellow does become too annoying, it will be just as well for me to take his case in hand, and so save you a little trouble."

"I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Phenix," the girl exclaimed.

"And yet it isn't really necessary for me to tell you that," she continued. "For I am sure you are aware that I will highly appreciate any kindness that you may show me."

"Oh, yes, I understand that."

"Now for my story. It was about five years ago, in the spring, that the company I was with went to Denver, Colorado. It was a regular dramatic troupe, and I was the singing chambermaid—that is, the woman who played the lively waiting-maids' and boys' parts, introducing songs and dances whenever it was possible."

"It was a small, inferior troupe; the manager had no money; we had been doing a fearful bad business, and made the jump to Denver with the idea that we might make a stand there and pick up. In fact, things were so bad with us that we came to Denver on our trunks!" and then Mignon laughed.

"I presume you can guess what that means, even if you are not well posted in the argot of the theater."

"Yes, I have heard of that operation before," the veteran detective replied. "As you did not have money enough to pay your fare, you got the railway company to put you through with the understanding that they were to hold on to the baggage until the fares were paid."

"Exactly! that is the process! Well, we got to Denver in that way, and after our first night was over, there was not one in the troupe who did not realize that we had made the biggest kind of a mistake in coming to the town."

"We could not get the large opera house, but went to a small, second-rate theater, and, as I said, we soon made the discovery that Denver was no little one-horse mining-camp, a frontier town, where almost anything in the way of a show would be tolerated. On the contrary, the audiences were critical, and demanded the best the market afforded for their money."

"We practically 'busted' after our first night, but played the week out, hoping against hope."

"The manager, of course, gave us the usual fairy tales about how he had written to the East for money, and expected that every mail would bring funds enough to take us out of town."

"On the Saturday night, after getting what money he could, the manager disappeared."

"One of the funny men on a local journal, in noting the event, suggested that he had undoubtedly gone East to hurry the money up."

"Well, Mr. Phenix, there we were, twelve people, with not twelve dollars between us, a week's board due, and the claim of the railway company on our baggage not yet satisfied."

"A pretty bad situation!"

"The railway men were gentlemen, and they told us we could have the baggage, the newspaper folks were also warm-hearted fellows, and they got us up a benefit which realized money enough to send the members of the troupe to Chicago, where all of them had friends."

"I did not go with the rest, for on the night

of the benefit, after a serio-comic act, which I did between the pieces, I was waited upon by a gentleman who introduced himself as the manager of the Theater Comique in Tin Cup, a thriving mining-camp up in the mountains, and he offered me twenty-five dollars a week, and all expenses, including fare from Denver to Tin Cup and back, if I would engage for a month with him."

"That seems like a liberal offer."

"I accepted it, but first took the precaution to ask some of the newspaper boys about the man and his place."

"It was not a first-class temple of the drama, I imagine," Joe Phenix remarked with a smile.

"Oh, I knew from the name that it was a variety shop," Mignon replied.

"But there is a deal of difference between them," she explained.

"You take a first-class variety hall, and a woman can work there with almost as much comfort as in a regular theater, and then they go down by degrees to the low dive where it is not possible for a decent woman to remain."

"The boys gave the Tin Cup place a good name; said they had a bar in the front of the house, and a wine-room under the stage, but good order was kept and all the regular variety stars who came to Denver went to Tin Cup also."

"I had never worked in a variety house, but I had been in them all over the country, attending matinees when my own party did not play, so I knew pretty well all about the business, so off I went to Tin Cup, but I was careful to make the arrangement beforehand that I was not to appear in the wine-room."

"The wine-room in the variety shop answers to the green-room of the regular theater in this respect: it is a waiting-place for the performers, when they are not engaged upon the stage, but whereas it is almost impossible for any non-professional to gain access to the regular theater green-room, or even to get past the back-door keeper, so as to get behind the scenes, in the variety place anybody can gain admittance to the wine-room if they are willing to spend money freely for liquor."

"Yes, I understand; I have been in a number of variety theater wine-rooms, and if the local authorities did their duty such pest-holes would be stamped out, for I know of nothing more demoralizing to the young men who frequent them."

"It is not the fault of the performers!" the actress-detective declared, "for I do not believe there is one in a hundred, even among the men, who would not gladly see the wine-room abolished. It is the greedy saloon-keepers who run the dives that are anxious to keep such dens in existence."

"But to resume. I found the Tin Cup place to be pretty decent as variety theaters go in the West. I wasn't first-class in the serio-comic line, by any manner of means, but I happened to have a lot of new songs which the Tin Cupites hadn't heard, and as I had good costumes, with plenty of cheek, I managed to dash through somehow, and got to be quite a favorite."

"One little circumstance which occurred on the afternoon that I arrived in the camp, created a deal of talk and really paved the way for my success."

"The stage-coach was late, and instead of getting in at dinner-time, did not arrive until almost three in the afternoon, so the manager said that in order to save me from the trouble of going down to the theater he would send the leader of the orchestra to the hotel, and I could go over my music with him there."

"There was a little sort of a parlor, and, as we were rehearsing the songs, into the room came an ugly-looking, medium-sized man, who was dressed pretty well, with the exception, that he had on a red flannel shirt, and wore a belt with revolvers plainly visible."

"He grinned at me, then took off his hat and made a bow."

"Are you the new heifer who is going to howl at the Theater Comique to-night?" he said."

Joe Phenix laughed outright.

"Upon my word I think that is about the most astonishing salutation that I ever heard of in all my experience!" he declared.

"I was sitting down, holding the music for the leader, and humming the air as he played it when the man entered," Mignon explained.

"No sooner had he ended the speech than I was on my feet so quickly that any one would have been justified in thinking I was moved by electricity."

"You were angry, of course?"

"Angry!" Mignon exclaimed. "Angry is no word for it. I was mad, mad clean through!"

And the girl's eyes snapped, while the little iron-like fists doubled up.

"I do not wonder at it," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Such a speech would be enough to put any woman's blood in a flame."

"And what made it worse was that after I got on my feet I saw there was a dozen or fifteen grinning wretches in the entry, who had evidently followed the man with the idea of seeing some fun."

"And from what I know of you, Mignon, I do not doubt their anticipations were gratified," the veteran detective remarked in his dry way.

"Oh, yes, but not in the way they expected," the girl replied, a baleful light gleaming in her eyes. "They had come with the idea that the ugly-faced fellow was going to have considerable sport in guying the variety girl, but before the guying got well under way, they quickly understood that, to use the old Western saying, the man had bit off a good deal more than he could chew."

"Get right out of here, now!" I exclaimed, pointing to the door with the air of a tragedy queen. "I want you to understand that at present this is not the public parlor, but a private apartment, and if you don't get a move on you instantler, I will take and pitch you out, head and heels!"

"You see I couched my warning in good plain United States talk, so that the man could not possibly misunderstand me."

"He must have been dull of comprehension indeed not to have comprehended your meaning," Joe Phenix remarked, with a smile.

"Oh, yes, he understood me, and a more astonished man I never saw," Mignon declared.

"He stared, open-mouthed, and the rest followed his example for a moment, then one man snickered, and the others quickly followed suit."

"Of course it seemed utterly ridiculous to them for a woman to make such a threat," the veteran detective observed.

"Oh, yes, and then it was natural for them to have a poor opinion of a girl who made a living by singing and dancing upon a public stage in a variety hall," Mignon remarked.

"My speech aroused the anger of the man at once," she continued.

"He had come there for the express purpose of having some fun with the song and dance girl, and the idea that she should have spirit enough to talk back to him was galling to his proud spirit, particularly as the retort had provoked the laughter of his companions at his expense."

"Darned if you ain't the most sassy she-imp that I have struck in a dog's age!" he declared. "And I have a mighty good mind to smack you in the mouth two or three times just to learn you a little manners!" the fellow continued.

"As I have told you, I was mad all through, and therefore not disposed to stand any nonsense," Mignon explained.

"So I did not stop to bandy any more words with the man but made a rush at him."

"He was taken completely by surprise by the attack, and although he attempted to guard against my blow, he did not possess sufficient knowledge of the manly art of self-defense to do it, therefore the result was he got a right-hand swing on the jaw which sent him spinning through the door, into the entry, where he sprawled on the flat of his back like a huge frog, amid the laughter and jeers of his companions."

"From what I know of your capabilities in the boxing line I can readily understand how completely you must have astonished the man."

"It was fully a minute before he recovered sufficiently to get on his feet, and then he looked at me with wondering eyes," Mignon declared.

"My blood was up, and I was really anxious for him to give me another chance at him, but I soon comprehended that he hadn't any idea of trying it on again."

"The single blow had satisfied him that he was 'not in it' when it came to facing me in a boxing bout."

"Come on!" I exclaimed. "Time! Come up to the scratch and take your medicine like a man!"

"Not by a darned sight!" he answered. "I reckon that I have got all of you that I want, and you kin jest try your fists on somebody else, for you will not git any another chance at me, if I know myself, and I reckon I do!"

"He was a sensible man to know when he had got enough," Joe Phenix remarked. "Some fellows would have required a number of lessons."

"This little incident helped to make my first appearance a success, for, of course, it did not take long for an account of the affair to travel from one end of the town to the other, and the miners had a curiosity to see what kind of a performer the woman was who had been able to knock out one of the toughest men in the camp," Mignon remarked.

"I am not a first-class serio-comic, but as Tin Cup never got any but ordinary performers in that line I was able to make a good impression, and before my first week ended became a favorite."

"Of course, as was only natural under the circumstances, there were any quantity of men who wanted to make love to me."

"Women at that time were few and far between in the camp, and there were lots of men who were tired of keeping bachelor's hall, and would have been glad to have picked up a wife, even if they had to take her off of a variety stage."

"Men who lead the lonesome lives of miners in the western camps are not apt to be particular about a little matter of that kind," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Among the rest who laid siege to me was this Barnabas Doffheimer," the girl continued. "He was one of the great men of the camp, and at

this time he was engaged in a fight with some other parties for the possession of a valuable property known as the Blue Eagle Mine.

"It was the general opinion of the town that the other parties had the best claim, but that Barney Doffheimer, as everybody called him, would be certain to win because he had plenty of money to back him while the other men were poor."

"In a struggle of that kind there isn't any doubt that the men with the biggest purse do stand the best chance."

"The fight was being carried on in the courts by the lawyers, and as the party opposed to Doffheimer had possession of the mine it was anticipated that the speculator, who was noted for his desperate and high-handed way of doing business, would attempt to put the other men out by main force without waiting to see how the courts would decide."

"Yes, in a case of this kind, to 'jump the claim' is considered the proper caper," the veteran detective observed.

"That was just the kind of game he played," Mignon replied. "He organized a force of desperate fellows, and suddenly attacked the other party; there was an obstinate fight, but Barney captured the mine, after two of the principal men on the other side were killed. Then the courts decided that he had the best claim to the property, and as he was already in possession that settled the matter."

"I presume his success made him the lion of the town?"

"Oh, yes, after his victory he was by long odds the biggest man in the camp, and, flushed by his success, he thought it would be a fine thing to complete his triumph by marrying me."

"Mind you, he considered he was doing me a great honor by proposing to make me Mrs. Doffheimer, and had the cool impudence to tell me so."

"It isn't often that you will find a man like myself, worth a cool million or two, who is willing to marry an actress," he remarked to me, and you can imagine how angry and disgusted he was when I told him that if he was worth a dozen millions it would not make any difference, for he was not at all my style of man."

"Yes, I can understand just exactly how he felt. Like the sultan in the Eastern tale, he thought he had but to say the word and you would be glad to accept his offer."

"He was a very dull sort of a fellow as far as a woman was concerned, although he may have been extra sharp as a money-maker, for he had not sense enough to understand that I meant just what I said, but seemed to have the idea that if he kept on I would change my mind in time."

"I should judge, from what I have seen of him, that he is a pig-headed sort of man who would not be inclined to take 'no' for an answer."

"He kept up his attentions all the time I was in the camp, and when my engagement ended, he even went to the trouble of taking a trip clear to Denver with me, hoping to be able to persuade me to change my mind on the journey."

"It is apparent that the man did not know you," Joe Phenix remarked in a significant way.

"Well, as I said before, he was a man of no judgment at all as far as a woman is concerned. One of the stubborn bullheads who, because he had been successful in making money, thought he could have his own way about everything."

"I was honest with the man, right from the beginning," the girl continued.

"He was introduced to me with a great flourish of trumpets, you know, by the proprietor of the theater, and I had an idea in the beginning that the man amounted to something, but it did not take me long to discover that he was but little better than an ignorant barbarian, who fairly worshiped money, and had an idea that because he had been lucky enough to make a goodly sum, it was the duty of everybody who hadn't got any money to get down on their knees to him."

"You are correct in your estimate of the man," Joe Phenix remarked. "From what I have seen of him, I am satisfied that he has an idea that money is all-powerful, and if a man has enough, and is disposed to pay it out, he can accomplish almost anything."

"And what a mistake a man makes when he comes to such a conclusion!" the girl declared. "There are any quantity of things in this world which money will not buy!"

"Very true, but it is a hard task to make a man of this sort believe that it can be true."

"As I told you, I was honest with the man from the start, for I told him right in the beginning that it wasn't any use for him to make love to me, for I was a good deal more like a man than a woman, and did not care for lovers, which is the truth, you know."

Joe Phenix nodded assent.

"But he, in his obstinate way, made the mistake of thinking that I did not mean what I said, and so kept on with his distasteful attentions."

"Well, from the way he has begun it is evident he has not given up hope," the veteran detective observed.

"It certainly appears so," Mignon remarked with a grimace.

"Well, he will only have his labor for his pains," she continued.

"In a little mining-camp, such as Tin Cup was when I was there, it was not an easy matter to avoid him, particularly as I was on the stage and so in public life, but I can tell the gentleman that he will find I am altogether differently situated here, and if he attempts to bother me any I will have him brought up with a round turn!"

"I do not doubt that he will attempt to renew his attentions, for he is one of the kind of men who prides himself upon not knowing when he is beaten, and he will undoubtedly try to persuade you to look with a favorable eye upon his suit."

"He might as well save himself the trouble," Mignon declared. "And I shall not hesitate to tell him so in pretty plain language too, if he persists in his attentions."

"New York is not Tin Cup, and what I was compelled to put up with there I would not stand for a single moment here."

"He is riding on the topmost wave of success now, I understand," Joe Phenix observed. "People who are supposed to be posted say he has made five or six millions in his mining speculations and he may argue that his great wealth may persuade you to look with a favorable eye upon his suit."

"Not much!" Mignon exclaimed.

The detective laughed, explained that he thought it wise to put her on her guard, and the interview came to an end.

At the door they parted, Joe Phenix going up Broadway while Mignon kept on down the avenue.

CHAPTER III.

THE COLORADO MILLIONAIRE.

BEFORE Mignon had gone a block she encountered a blonde-haired, blue-eyed girl who greeted her in the warmest manner.

The new-comer was rather over-dressed, and possessed that peculiar style common to many of the stage people, who carry into private life the habit of "posing," as though they were facing an audience.

The lady was called Maggie Pearl and she was a well-known burlesque actress.

A few years previous to the time of which we write, Miss Pearl and the actress-detective had been members of the same troupe, and as Maggie was a good-natured girl, who came of a fine family, and had been well brought up, the two had got along very well together.

"I am so delighted to see you, dear!" Miss Pearl exclaimed, shaking hands with Mignon with as much warmth as though she had believed her to be the dearest friend she had in the world.

"Where have you kept yourself for so long? I haven't either seen or heard of you for an age."

"Oh, I have been right here in New York, but then I haven't acted for some time, and when one retires into private life, they are soon lost sight of, particularly in a big city like New York."

"That is so true!" the other exclaimed. "Any one can hide away far better in a big city like old Gotham than in a little town where everybody knows everybody else. But I am so glad I met you, not only on the score of our old acquaintanceship, but because I have something particular to say to you, and if you don't mind I will walk down the street a little way with you so I can explain."

"I will be delighted to have you," Mignon replied.

And then the two girls went on together.

"This matter that I am going to speak about is rather a peculiar one," the burlesque actress explained. "And I have my doubts in regard to my wisdom in agreeing to have anything to do with it, but, in a rash moment, I promised that I would, but after reflecting upon the matter I made up my mind that I would tell you all about it on the first opportunity, and that would clear my skirts."

"Oh, yes, undoubtedly."

"Well, to come to Hecuba immediately, a week or so ago I made the acquaintance of a gentleman who was disposed to patronize people in our line of business in the most liberal manner, and as he was a man of great wealth, who flung his money away with almost as much recklessness as though it was only water, he was an extremely desirable friend."

"Such men are rare," Mignon remarked. "The wealthy fellow generally holds on to his money more tightly than the man who hasn't got much."

"This man is a new-comer to the city, and wants to make a splurge, I suppose," the other remarked.

"I went to a little supper that he gave last week, and in the course of the conversation your name came up, and when he learned that I was well-acquainted with you he became very much interested in me, and as soon as he got a chance to speak to me alone, said he had had the pleasure of your acquaintance once and was anxious to renew it, but did not know exactly how to go about it, as you were not on the stage, and he was ignorant of your address. Then he

plumply declared he would give me a handsome diamond ring if I would hunt you up and arrange it so he could meet you at my flat, thus giving him the opportunity I desired."

Mignon's lips curled in contempt.

"You will not be able to get your ring, Maggie," she remarked. "For I know who the gentleman is, and I do not care to meet him."

"Well, I knew I was foolish to allow myself to be drawn into the matter, but I made up my mind to make a clean breast of it to you, the first time we met."

"Oh, there is no harm done, but if you had persuaded me to pay you a visit, and then I had encountered this man I should have been seriously angry."

"Yes, after I thought the matter over I came to the conclusion that it was very stupid in me to be bribed by the offer, for if you desired to continue your acquaintance with the man he would not be obliged to go to any such trouble."

"That was a natural conclusion," Mignon remarked.

"The man knows very well that I do not care for his acquaintance—that is, if he is the one I think—Doffheimer?"

"Yes, that is the man. He is very rich, I believe, but I know you of old, and so understand that whether a fellow is rich or poor, it does not make any difference to you," Miss Pearl observed.

"You were always a queer fish about the fellows, anyway," the burlesque actress continued. "You never cared for beaux or lovers, like the other girls, and I never could see but what you got along just as well as the rest who were not happy unless they had some fellow ready and willing to wait upon them."

"Yes, I never troubled my head about the men in the lover line. I liked them well enough as friends, but the moment they began to talk of love, then I was anxious to get rid of them."

"Well, it is all right as far as this affair is concerned," the burlesque actress remarked. "There is no harm done. You know that the man is anxious to meet you, and if you do not care to continue his acquaintance, you are not obliged to do it, for, as you justly remarked, when a woman in our line retires to private life, it is a difficult matter for any one to bother her."

By this time the two had arrived at Twentieth street, and they were compelled to halt on account of a balky horse which had come to a stop on the cross-walk.

There was a group of people gathered on the corner, watching the men who were trying to persuade the stubborn beast to go on, so the two paused a couple of yards from the curb-stone.

Then a man came through the crowd and encountered the two girls face to face.

He was a man of fifty or thereabouts, a rather undersized, stockily-built gentleman, with a coarse face, the heavy jowl of which strongly resembled a bull-dog's.

The man was expensively arrayed, and the diamonds which sparkled in his shirt-bosom, and on his little finger, were worth a small fortune.

His face lighted up, and he bowed with the utmost politeness as he came face to face with the two girls.

"I am really delighted, ladies, at this unexpected pleasure!" he exclaimed.

"I was speaking about you, Miss Lawrence, to Miss Pearl here only the other day," he continued. "And I took the liberty of telling her what good friends we were out in Colorado in old Tin Cup."

"I was not worth so much money in those days as I am now, but I am sure that I enjoyed myself a heap sight better. I trust though, Miss Mignon, that now I have been fortunate enough to meet you again that you will permit me to call upon you and renew the old acquaintance."

"I am not in public life now, Mr. Doffheimer," Mignon remarked in a formal way. "I have retired from the stage, and would prefer not to have you call, for I have not changed my opinion in regard to a certain matter in the least."

"Ah, yes, you were always inclined to be obstinate," the man exclaimed in a playful way, and forcing a laugh, although it was plain that he was not at all pleased by the actress-detective's answer.

"I perceive that time has altered your position materially," he continued.

"You were on the stage, and now you are not; my situation too has altered considerably. Then I was a big man in Colorado; now I am a big man in New York, and there is a heap of difference between the two positions."

"Really, Mr. Doffheimer, I take no interest in the matter," Mignon replied with increasing coldness.

"In the West I was so situated that I could not very well avoid you without being absolutely rude, and as you had always treated me like a gentleman I hated to do that, but here in New York, there is no reason why our acquaintance should continue. It is not likely that I will ever meet you at the houses of any of my friends, and also equally improbable that I shall encounter you in the circle which you frequent,

so it is hardly possible that we shall ever see each other in society at all."

"Oh, I don't doubt that you have figured the thing out all right," Doffheimer admitted, evidently very much disgusted by the plain words of the actress-detective.

"But I tell you, Mignon, you are making a big mistake in going back on me in this way," he continued, and he shook his big head in a regretful way.

"As I told you I am a heap sight different man here in New York to what I was out in Colorado. I was only worth a million or so then but I reckon I could clean up four or five now, for I have been making a deal of money lately."

"Really, Mr. Doffheimer, I do not take any interest in the matter," Mignon replied. "As I told you, circumstances have changed greatly with me since you last saw me. My father was a wealthy man, and by his death I came in for all his property, so that now I have more money than I know what to do with, therefore if you were worth a hundred million it would not make any difference to me."

Just at this point the conversation was interrupted by a sudden movement of the crowd.

One of the men who had been trying to persuade the balky beast to go on had become disgusted by the ugliness of the horse and without saying anything to the others, who were tugging away at the beast's bridle, applied the lighted end of his cigar to the steed's flank, and the result of this movement was to cause the beast to plunge wildly to one side as though he meditated taking to the sidewalk.

This made the crowd scatter in alarm, and as the members of the group pushed against Doffheimer he gave a sudden moan of pain and fell forward toward the actress-detective.

Mignon caught him in her strong arms, thinking that he was overcome by a sudden stroke.

Then the man gave a gasp and apparently fainted away.

Mignon lowered the senseless form to the sidewalk, resting the head on her knee.

"Stand back and give him air!" she cried, waving away the people who immediately began to crowd around.

There was a policeman at hand, who had hurried to the spot, attracted by the crowd, and he immediately proceeded to drive the bystanders away, then he took a look at the man and shook his head.

By this time Doffheimer's face was deadly pale, and he appeared more like a dead man than a living one.

"I reckon this is a case for the doctors, miss," the policeman remarked.

Another officer now pushed his way through the crowd.

It was the captain in command of the precinct. "What is it, officer?" the police captain asked as he bent over the prostrate man; "a murder?" and he looked inquiringly at the actress-detective.

"I dun'no, sir; he's a goner I fear," answered the policeman, shaking his head in a solemn way.

"Give me a hand, Murphy, to carry him to the druggist, and then you can summon an ambulance," he said to the other blue-coat.

Hardly had the words left his lips when the warning-bell of an ambulance rung out clear on the air.

"Hello! there is one now!" the captain exclaimed. "Stop him, Murphy, and see if you can get him to take this man to a hospital!"

The policeman obeyed the command.

As it happened the ambulance was empty, so the stricken man was speedily conveyed to it.

"You had better come along, ladies," the captain said to the two girls, falling into the natural error of supposing that they had been in company with the sufferer.

"Then if it isn't a serious case you can have him taken home," the officer continued.

"Oh, dear! I don't like this at all!" Maggie Pearl whispered in Mignon's ear.

"We had better go," the actress-detective replied. "For it will be awkward to explain here, and at the hospital we can tell them all about the matter."

A little affair of this kind did not trouble an old stager like Mignon Lawrence in the least, and five minutes later the ambulance was on its way.

CHAPTER IV.

AN AWFUL DISCOVERY.

IN due time the ambulance drew up at the hospital; the ladies were shown into the waiting-room while the senseless man was carried into one of the inner rooms.

"I do think this is one of the strangest things that I ever saw or heard of in all my experience!" Maggie Pearl declared, when the hospital attendants retired, leaving the two girls free to converse.

"Yes, it was a sudden stroke, and I do not understand it at all, for the attack seemed to come without warning," Mignon remarked, in a reflective way.

"I do not know much about such matters," she continued. "For I don't remember to have ever seen anybody stricken down in this way,

but it is my impression from what I have heard, and read, that a stroke of this sort does not come without some warning."

"There wasn't any warning in this case, excepting that he gave a sort of a half-gasp and a look of awful pain came over his face just as he fell."

"That was occasioned by the pain of the stroke, I should think, and cannot be considered to be a warning," Mignon observed.

"I thought it would be best for us to come along," she continued. "For if there is anything serious in the attack the authorities should be notified in regard to who he is."

"We might have explained to the officer on the street that we were not with Mr. Doffheimer, as he imagined, but I did not think it was worth while," she added. "For then it would have necessitated a long explanation, and there was no time for it."

"Oh, yes, it was a great deal better for us to come along, although at first I did not like the idea at all," Maggie Pearl observed. "I never was in a hospital in my life, and I had a dread of coming. It was foolish, of course, but I am a notional creature and take just such whims sometimes."

The conversation at this point was interrupted by the entrance into the room of the police captain, and the doctor who had taken charge of the patient.

The moment they came into the apartment, Mignon, with her quick instinct, suspected that there was something wrong from the expression on their faces.

"Are either of you two ladies related to the gentleman?" the officer asked.

"No, sir; acquaintances merely," Mignon replied, promptly. "In fact, we were not with him, but just happened to meet the gentleman as we were coming down Broadway, and he stopped for a moment to converse with us."

"You are only friends of his then?" the police captain remarked, and Mignon's quick eyes were able to detect that there was a very peculiar expression on the face of the officer and he looked at them in a searching way as he spoke.

"Well, sir, neither one of us could be considered as being anything more than a mere acquaintance of the gentleman; to say that we were his friends would be to use too strong a term."

"The intelligence will not affect you so much then," the officer remarked. "For I presume you are prepared to hear that the gentleman is in a bad way?"

"Yes, I was afraid that the stroke was a serious one, although I have no real knowledge of such cases," the actress-detective replied. "Still, I imagined from the fact that he fell in such a peculiar manner that it was a pretty serious attack."

"Yes, very serious," the police captain replied with a weighty shake of the head.

"By the way, would you have any objection to relate to me all the particulars of the affair, so I can draw up a report, you understand," the officer continued in a careless way, which Mignon immediately suspected to be assumed.

"And in the first place what is the gentleman's name, and who is he?" he added.

"He is interested in Colorado mines to a large extent, and bears the reputation of being a very wealthy man. He is a new-comer in New York, I believe, and his name is Barnabas Doffheimer," Mignon replied.

"Oh, yes, I have read all about him in the newspapers!" the police captain exclaimed. "He is one of the big guns in mining matters."

"Did I understand you to say that you met the gentleman as you were walking down Broadway?" he continued.

"Yes, sir, there was a balky horse on the crosswalk of the side street, and we halted to watch the men who were trying to coax him along, and then Mr. Doffheimer came through the crowd, and as we met him face to face he stopped to talk to us."

"How long did he talk before he fell?"

"A few minutes only, three or four, possibly five, but not longer to my thinking, eh, Maggie?"

"I do not think it was as long as five minutes, and I am quite sure it wasn't over!" Miss Pearl declared.

"Was there any one with Mr. Doffheimer?" the police captain asked.

"No, sir," Mignon replied, wondering at the question.

"You are quite sure about this?" the officer exclaimed, quite sharply.

"Yes, sir!" both girls exclaimed in a breath.

"If any one had been following the gentleman—any suspicious character, you would have been pretty certain to have noticed him, wouldn't you?" the officer questioned to the surprise of the girls.

"Yes, I think we would, although there was quite a crowd on the corner, watching the horse, and Mr. Doffheimer had to push his way through to approach us," Mignon explained.

"Ah, had to push his way through did he?" the police captain exclaimed, his face lighting up a little.

"Yes, sir," Mignon replied while Maggie Pearl stared in wonder, utterly in the dark as to

why the captain should trouble himself to go in to all these details.

"Did he have any trouble with any one in the crowd on account of his pushing them out of his way?"

"Oh, no, the crowd was not compact enough for him to have to shove anybody aside rudely in order to get through," Mignon replied. "As he advanced the people gave way and allowed him to pass."

The police captain looked disappointed, and he shook his head as though he was bothered.

"Then he did not have any trouble with any one?"

"No, sir."

"And he was talking with us just as pleasantly as could be when the stroke came?" Maggie Pearl exclaimed, anxious to give all the information in her power.

"You did not observe any one of the crowd approach him in a menacing, or threatening way?" the officer asked, appearing to be very much puzzled.

Both the girls shook their heads.

"And from the way you three were standing I judge that it would not be possible for any one to have come near Mr. Doffheimer without your knowledge."

"No, sir," Mignon replied. "Of course, you understand that there were people passing up and down all the time we were talking, and owing to the crowd they brushed right past us, but no one said anything to Mr. Doffheimer, or, in fact, took any notice whatever of him."

"This is really one of the most mysterious cases that ever came to my knowledge!" the police captain declared.

"Ladies there has been a foul crime committed!"

The two girls stared.

"Mr. Doffheimer has been murdered!" the police captain announced.

"Murdered!" cried the girls in earnest.

"Yes, stabbed in the back with one of the most peculiar daggers that I ever saw," and as the officer spoke he held up a bit of steel about as big around as a lead pencil and sharpened at both ends; it was a trifle over six inches long; one point was as sharp almost as a needle while the other was rather blunt.

In fact, it more resembled a gigantic awl than anything else.

"This is the weapon with which the deed was done," he continued, handing the bit of steel to Mignon who had advanced with eager curiosity to examine it, her manner a decided contrast to Maggie Pearl's, who shrunk away when the captain produced the peculiar weapon.

"It is a sort of a poniard; the Italians and Spaniards are partial to little daggers, but I never came across anything that was quite so odd as this."

"When the examination was made we found this sticking in the body," the officer explained.

"The blow had been given right at the spine, and whoever delivered the stroke, knew exactly where to strike so as to produce almost instant death."

"It is my idea that the dagger had a small, wooden handle, and as it was not very firmly fixed in it, after the blow was given, the murderer when he attempted to draw out the knife merely pulled the handle off, leaving the steel sticking in the wound."

"This seems like a story of the middle ages," Mignon remarked, examining the peculiar dagger with the eyes of an expert. "And if I had not been an eye-witness of the tragedy, I would not have been willing to believe that such a thing could have taken place!"

"It is perfectly dreadful!" Maggie Pearl asserted. "And if I had only known that the man was killed before my eyes, I would have fainted dead away from fright!"

"And now, young ladies, that you comprehend the nature of the tragedy, can either of you give any information which will help me to gain a clue to the murderer?" the police captain asked.

"I am sure I cannot," Miss Pearl declared. "I did not notice anything out of the way, and no one came near him to my knowledge. I thought he had been seized by a sudden faintness."

"That was also my impression," Mignon remarked. "But now that I come to recall the circumstances, I remember that just previous to his falling there was a movement in the crowd produced by the horse's actions. He made a move toward the sidewalk, and as the crowd scattered, some of them pushed against us, and then Mr. Doffheimer fell forward into my arms."

"That was the time when the blow was evidently struck," the doctor observed, for the first time joining in the conversation.

"This was surely the work of a person who had a grudge against Mr. Doffheimer," he continued. "Some deadly foe who had been following the man whom he hated, seeking for an opportunity to execute his vengeance upon him."

"Well, I suppose that is about the way of it," the police captain observed, slowly. "But I must say that for boldness this goes ahead of anything I ever heard of in all my time, and the man who did the job must be possessed of a fearful amount of nerve, or else he would never

dare to commit such a murder right in broad daylight and in a crowded street like Broadway where the chances were a hundred to one that he would be caught in the act."

"It certainly is a most extraordinary crime!" the doctor coincided. "And the more the matter is examined the greater becomes the puzzle."

"I shall have to take your names and addresses, ladies," the officer observed in a brisk, business-like way. "For it will be necessary for you to appear at the inquest and give your testimony in regard to how Mr. Doffheimer came to his death."

"You are both residents of the city, I presume?" he added.

The pair answered in the affirmative, and then Mignon gave her name, and residence.

"Are you related to the late Mr. L-count, the minister?" the officer asked, as he made a memorandum in his note-book.

"Yes, sir, he was my father," Mignon replied much to the surprise of her companion, who knew nothing of the actress-detective's private life, and was amazed to discover that she was the child of a man whose fame as a minister was almost world-wide.

"I am pleased to have the honor of making your acquaintance, miss," the officer remarked in an extremely respectful way. "I was well acquainted with your late father, and there was not a man in the city whom I more honored."

Mignon bowed in acknowledgment of the gracious words.

Then Miss Pearl gave her name and address.

The name recalled her to the police captain's recollection immediately.

"Oh, I think I have had the pleasure of seeing you on the stage," he remarked. "You are playing at the Paragon Theater now?"

"Yes, sir," the young actress replied, greatly pleased at being so quickly identified.

"You look considerably different off the stage from what you do when you are on it, and that is the reason why I did not recognize you until I learned your name," the captain remarked.

Miss Pearl smiled, and observed that she had often been reminded of the fact.

"You are at liberty to depart now," the police captain said.

"The inquest will probably take place to-morrow," he continued. "But I will see that you have timely notice."

"I am sorry to have to put you to the trouble of coming, but under the circumstances your testimony is extremely important and we could not get on without it."

"We will be glad to do anything we can which will aid in clearing up the mystery of course," Mignon replied.

"Oh, yes, although it is really dreadful to be obliged to have anything to do with such a horrid case," Miss Pearl declared.

And then the girls departed, leaving the police captain to puzzle his brains over the greatest mystery which had ever come to his knowledge.

CHAPTER V.

THE INQUEST.

THE mysterious murder of the millionaire miner created a deal of excitement.

New York is always ready for a big sensation and in this case it most certainly got it.

The newspapers were full of theories in regard to the incomprehensible affair, and the murder was the general topic of conversation throughout the city.

The crime had been committed in so strange a manner, and the murderer had succeeded in escaping without leaving behind a single clue which would aid the police in unraveling the mystery, with the exception of the peculiar weapon with which the deed had been done.

And in regard to this bit of steel, after a careful examination the authorities came to the conclusion that it was a homemade weapon; an old, worn-out, three-cornered file had been taken and ground thin until the edges had disappeared, transforming it into the smooth piece of steel which had stolen away the life of the Colorado man.

And as the newspapers were not able to find out anything in regard to the tragedy, beyond the bare facts, already known to our readers, and as public interest was so excited that everything appertaining to the murder was eagerly read, the newspaper reporters fairly besieged the houses of the two ladies, each particular man filled with the belief that he might be able to learn from the girls something new in regard to the tragedy.

Neither one of the two attempted to deny admittance to the interviewers, but conversed freely with all who came, and as the indefatigable news-gatherers couldn't get any information which was not already in possession of the public they filled up the space at their disposal by giving a full description of the ladies, what they looked like, how they were dressed, what they thought about the matter, and a lot of trash of the kind which had no bearing at all upon the mystery.

At the inquest the friends of the dead man turned out in force.

All the mining magnates of the metropolis were there, but none of them were able to give any information which would serve to throw any light upon the tragedy.

Like all men who had risen from the ranks, Doffheimer had made plenty of enemies, fellows who had been eagerly pushing forward to the goal of success, and had been shoved to one side by the successful speculators, but none of the associates of the dead man were able to point to any one particular foe of the victim who would be likely to commit such a deed as had resulted in the taking off of the millionaire.

One and all testified that outside of business Doffheimer was a jolly good fellow who desired to be on friendly terms with everybody, and had been known to go out of his way to do men a service.

In business he was a hard, implacable man, who had little mercy upon any daring antagonist who attempted to rival him.

His motto from the beginning had been to crush all opposition with an iron hand.

If a man got in his way let him look out for himself, for Doffheimer would strike him down without mercy.

The testimony disclosed the fact that there were doubtless twenty—possibly fifty men in the past who had attempted to oppose the daring speculator and been ruined in the struggle.

It was probable that there were plenty of these men who would have been quite willing to give a death-blow to the man who had made them but little better than beggars, but no one was able to indicate any one particular man as being likely to be the one who had done the deed of blood.

Some of the magnates testified that they had heard threats made by some of the parties against Doffheimer after the crash came which leveled their hopes to the ground.

But idle words uttered at such a moment have little weight, and after the inquest was over, when the detectives came to investigate the matter in order to get a clue to the authors of the threats, they found the memory of the magnates to be extremely treacherous.

After a great deal of trouble they detectives succeeded in getting the names of a few men, who, after their ruin, had sworn that they would take personal vengeance upon their successful rival.

But when the bloodhounds went on a still hunt after these particular men, they found that the most of them were dead, and the rest sunk into an obscurity which completely hid them from all search.

As far as the detectives could discover there was not a single one of the suspected men in the city, and none of their former associates could tell anything about them.

Not a single fact was brought out at the inquest which is not already known to our readers.

Barnabas Doffheimer was struck down in the main street of the great metropolis of the New World in broad daylight, with a dozen people near enough to him to touch the man with their outstretched hands, and yet there was not the slightest clue to the doer of the deed, and so the coroner's jury were forced to render a verdict that Doffheimer had been murdered by an unknown hand.

Doffheimer was the principal man of a syndicate of mining men, which had been organized to control a certain group of mines in Colorado, and his associates, filled with indignation at his untimely taking off, held a solemn meeting and offered a reward of five thousand dollars for the arrest and conviction of Doffheimer's murderer.

The victim was a widower with two children, a son, Moses Doffheimer, a young man of twenty-one.

The son, who had received a good education, had acted as his father's secretary ever since he left school at the age of seventeen and so was well-posted in regard to all his sire's transactions.

Doffheimer left no will, therefore his estate went to his children, and as soon as the action of the mining-men in offering a reward was made public, the son on behalf of himself and sister offered ten thousand dollars for the capture of the culprit.

CHAPTER VI.

SEARCHING FOR A CLUE.

ON the morning of the day which succeeded the one on which the inquest was held, Joe Phenix sat in his office, reading one of the morning newspapers.

He had just arrived and was alone, Tony Western, his assistant, being absent attending to a little business matter.

The veteran detective had just finished reading the account of the coroner's inquest in the Doffheimer case and the additional comments on the large rewards offered by the mining syndicate, and the children of the victim, for the apprehension of the murderers when Mignon Lawrence made her appearance.

Joe Phenix greeted the girl cordially and hastened to place a chair for her.

"Here is a chance for me to do a little work at last, I think!" the actress-detective exclaimed as she seated herself.

"You refer, I presume, to the Doffheimer case?" Joe Phenix observed.

"Yes; you were not present at the inquest?"

"No, I had some business on hand which required my personal attention, and then I knew the newspapers would give a full account of the matter."

"You were correct in regard to that," Mignon rejoined with a smile. "The reporters didn't miss any of the points."

"The newspaper men are seldom to be found wanting in a case of this kind."

"How strange it was that the tragedy should occur so soon after our discussion in regard to the man," Mignon observed in a reflective way.

"Yes, but just such strange things are continually happening in this uncertain life of ours," the veteran detective replied.

"There never was a truer saying than the one from the French which declares that it is the unexpected that is always happening."

"Yes, that is certainly so. Here we were debating in regard to the probabilities of my being troubled by the man, and I was speculating upon the best way to get rid of him, and, lo! grim death steps in and settles the matter for good and all!"

"You had better take care how you speak about this affair, for if it comes out that you feared you were going to be annoyed by the man, some wiseacre will be sure to jump to the conclusion that you had a hand in his death," Joe Phenix observed with a smile.

Mignon laughed outright.

"Oh, you can trust me not to 'give the snap-away,' as the boys say!" she declared.

"But, joking aside I could see that suspicion was directed to me during my examination at the coroner's inquest, also to Maggie Pearl," the actress-detective continued.

"As we were talking to the man at the time that he received his death wound, these stupid heads came to the conclusion that as we said we did not see anybody attack the man we must have had a hand in the matter ourselves, although how it could be possible for us to stand, busy in conversation, facing the man, and at the same time stab him in the back is a mystery which I think would puzzle some of these suspicious gentlemen to explain."

"Yes, I should imagine so."

"The ridiculous suspicion doesn't trouble me at all, for any one with a grain of sense ought to know that even if I was the man's bitterest enemy, and eagerly desired to compass his death, I couldn't have taken an active part in the matter under the circumstances."

"Yes, but some men do not appear to have any sense when they undertake to get to the heart of a mystery of this kind," the veteran detective remarked.

"There is no clue to the murderer, but as you and Miss Pearl were conversing with the man when the blow was struck, they argue that you must know something about the matter."

"Yes, there are always plenty of fools ready to run away with the wildest kind of ideas," Mignon declared, with a sniff of contempt.

"You were anxious for a chance to display your skill in the detective line, and now here is an opportunity for you," Joe Phenix observed.

"Very true, and I am only too eager to undertake the task."

"The friends and family have come forward nobly in the reward line," the veteran detective observed.

"Yes, so I saw by the newspapers this morning."

"Fifteen thousand dollars is a large sum, and the offer ought to spur the detectives on to do extra good work."

"It should have that effect, for to the average man fifteen thousand dollars is a small fortune," Mignon observed in a doubtful way.

"But I must admit that I am a little incredulous about the matter," she continued. "If the detective is a man in love with his business, as he ought to be to do good work, it will not make much difference to him whether a big reward is offered or not."

"If he is the right kind of a man, with his heart in his profession, he will do his level best, even if he knows that he is not going to make a cent out of the case."

"You are right!" Joe Phenix exclaimed, decidedly. "The man who can only do good work when a reward is offered, is not a true detective, and the chances are that he will never distinguish himself."

"That is my opinion, and as far as this case is concerned, I would undertake it just as readily if there wasn't a dollar offered as a reward!" Mignon declared.

"You have got the right idea, and now let us get to work, and see what we can make of this matter."

"The old way in a case of this kind was to begin by ascertaining who would profit most by the death of the victim, the assumption being that that party would be the guilty one."

"Of course it does not follow that he or she

did the deed with their own hands, for in a number of cases a tool was employed," the detective continued.

"That theory carried out would point to the children of the dead man, the son and daughter," the actress-detective observed, thoughtfully.

"Yes, and although the rule is a good one, and has proved accurate time after time, yet when the application tends to throw suspicion upon the children of the victim then the seeker after knowledge must proceed with great caution, for hardly once in a thousand times will a child be guilty of raising a hand against the parent," Joe Phenix asserted.

"There is no doubt in regard to the truth of that statement," Mignon remarked.

"As far as the girl is concerned it is my opinion that she can be left out of the matter entirely," the veteran detective observed. "For a young woman must be a sort of a moral monster to be concerned in anything of the kind."

"Yes, I am glad for the honor of my sex to be able to assert my belief in the truthfulness of that statement."

"And now we come to the son—do you know anything about him?"

"I do not possess any knowledge that amounts to anything. He was in Tin Cup with his father; I met him half-a-dozen times, possibly, and, if my memory serves me rightly, he was a lank, overgrown youth with a rather backward manner."

"Not the kind of fellow who would be apt to have the wit or the pluck to engineer a crime of this kind, I fancy," Joe Phenix observed in a reflective way.

"No, decidedly not!"

"That settles the old rule, I think. It will not work in this case, and we must go on further afield."

"Doffheimer was concerned in some great mining speculations; the head and front of an important syndicate."

"And what is a syndicate?" the veteran detective continued.

"A combination of men in a certain line who usually expect to thrive by crushing out weaker men in the same line as themselves."

"And some one of these men, who have been, with ruthless violence, forced to the wall, has thought fit to take the law in his own hands and strike down the representative man of the syndicate!" Mignon exclaimed.

"Exactly! you have jumped to the correct conclusion in regard to my thoughts."

"And our first endeavor must be to find out if such a man exists, eh?" the actress-detective asked.

"Correct! and it ought not to be a very difficult matter, for it is not possible for a syndicate of this kind to ruin a man without plenty of people being aware of all the particulars of the affair."

"I think you are right in regard to that," Mignon remarked in a thoughtful way.

"And now, Mignon, we are obliged to leave the solid ground of fact and go into the fanciful world of imagination," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Having no facts to go on we must proceed on theory, become romancers and give free scope to ideas, more or less visionary."

"I understand! We are working out a puzzle and we must must cudgel our brains for a suitable explanation."

"Exactly! you have hit upon the truth."

"Now then, first comes the motive," the veteran detective continued. "Revenge, of course; there could not be any other under the circumstances."

"That is certainly the truth. No one, but a mortal foe, eager to satisfy his hatred, would have struck the blow in such a peculiar way."

"Yes, and it strikes me that the person who did the deed is not quite right in the upper story," the veteran detective argued, shrewdly.

"The murderer certainly did display a great deal of the cunning which is supposed to be a characteristic of some disordered minds," Mignon assented, speaking with great deliberation as though she was carefully weighing the matter on her mind.

"An ordinary man would have used a common knife or pistol," the detective observed.

"Yes, most certainly."

"And the party must have gone to considerable trouble in getting the tool ready, for it is no small job to grind the edges off of a file, and the peculiar weapon leads me to believe that a foreigner was the party who did the murder."

"I think that point is well taken, for no American—or in fact any English speaking party would be apt to go to the trouble of making a dagger of this kind when a few cents would procure a regular knife."

"This turning of an old file into a dagger is a regular Italian trick," Joe Phenix declared.

"At Headquarters there is quite a collection of daggers made in that way which the police have taken from Italians who have been placed under arrest."

"Now, you see, I have come to a certain conclusion in regard to two points," the veteran detective continued.

"First, the peculiar, cunning way in which the murder was done, makes me think that the mind of the murderer was unbalanced, or other-

wise the deed would never have been committed in broad daylight in one of the most public streets in the city."

"When a man wants to commit a murder it is the most natural thing in the world for him to select some dark and retired spot so that after the deed is done he will have a good chance to escape without danger of being apprehended."

"Yes, yes, that is correct!" the girl exclaimed.

"It might be argued that Doffheimer took such precautions that a foe could not get the opportunity to surprise him, but that is not correct, for there is no doubt that Doffheimer was a man who was accustomed to staying out late, and it would have been an easy matter for any foe to conceal himself in the neighborhood of the millionaire's house, and so be able to attack him with but little danger of any one getting the chance to interfere."

"Yes, I remember that in Colorado the man bore the reputation of being considerable of a bully, and he would not be the kind of fellow to take any extra precautions in regard to his personal safety."

"There was a reason for the attack, of course, and according to my thinking the man was killed to satisfy a personal grudge," Joe Phenix argued.

"It is clear from the circumstances of the case that the deed was not committed for the purpose of robbing the victim, nor was it a case of mistaken identity; that is Doffheimer was not killed on account of being mistaken for somebody else, but it was a cool, deliberate murder."

"Oh, yes, no doubt about that in my opinion," Mignon assented.

"There must have been some powerful motive or the deed would never have been done," the veteran detective declared. "And I have an idea that there may be a woman in the case."

"You are going on the old Turkish idea—'whenever there is any trouble look for the woman,'" the actress observed with a smile.

"That notion is not so absurd after all," Joe Phenix replied. "But in this affair there is, as far as I can see, only two solutions to the mystery. Either the murderer was a jealous rival whom Doffheimer had supplanted in the affections of a woman, or else he was some desperate man who had been ruined by the Colorado millionaire in a business transaction. Doffheimer bore the reputation of being reckless and unscrupulous when he got an interest in a valuable mine, and among his associates bore the name of 'the wrecker' for it was asserted that it was often his game when he could get control of a valuable claim to so manage the business of the mine as to make the expenses amount to more than the income, then assessment would follow assessment until the stockholders became so discouraged that they would be glad to part with their claims at one half of their value; Doffheimer and his pals were always ready to buy through a third party, and in the end they would get the property for one half of its real value."

"And such a proceeding is not robbery, of course, because it is business," Mignon exclaimed, contemptuously.

"So the world considers, but the Great Judge at the final tribunal may decide differently."

"Ah, yes, no doubt about it!"

"Now then, we must proceed on these two lines," the veteran detective observed.

"First, look for a woman who has favored Doffheimer at somebody else's expense, then examine into his mining transactions and see if there exists a man who has been ruined by the millionaire, and who is desperate enough to do this deed of blood."

"All right," Mignon exclaimed, rising as she spoke. "I will go ahead immediately, and I will be glad of the chance, for I am sick and tired of doing nothing."

"Report at once if you make any discoveries."

"Oh, yes, I will do so," and then the actress-detective departed.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SON.

AFTER leaving Joe Phenix's office, Mignon proceeded to Broadway for the purpose of taking an up town car, and as she halted on the corner of the street she was approached by a well-dressed young man who lifted his hat and accosted her in the politest manner.

"Isn't this Miss Lawrence—Miss Mignon Lawrence?" he asked.

There was something about the face of the gentleman which seemed to be familiar to her, although for the moment she was unable to recall when and where she had encountered him.

The man was young, not over twenty-three or four, dressed in an elegant manner, and yet there was something in his bearing which suggested to the experienced eyes of the actress that he was not a gentleman by birth.

His features were rather coarse, and although he had a heavy under jaw there were signs of weakness about the lower part of his face, and his shifting, uncertain blue eyes seemed to indicate that their owner was not a man who could be relied upon in an emergency.

As the reader knows who has followed the

fortune of Joe Phenix's Specials as related by us in the series of tales which have treated of their adventures, Mignon was a woman with two lives.

To one set of acquaintances she was known as Mignon Lawrence, the burlesque actress, a rather jolly sort of girl with "no nonsense about her," as her intimate acquaintances were wont to declare.

To another she was the daughter of one of the most distinguished ministers that New York had ever known, and these people regarded her as a rather quiet, backward girl with a decided objection to making herself prominent in any way.

Owing to the peculiar circumstances attending the death of the mining millionaire she was one of the principal witnesses at the inquest, and she had given her name as Mignon Lawrence, so it was as the "popular burlesque actress," to use the description of the reporters, that she had figured in that event.

The newspaper men, in their anxiety to furnish the public with all the particulars which could possibly be obtained in regard to the tragedy, had, in the absence of real news, gone to the trouble of giving a description of everybody who was at all connected with the mystery, so Mignon had been "interviewed" and "written up," thus bringing her prominently before the public, therefore when she was accosted by this well-dressed stranger the impression immediately came to her that he was a newspaper man after information.

"Yes, sir, that is my name," the girl replied.

"I trust you will pardon my presumption in addressing you," the gentleman said. "But the fact is that though I am a stranger to you yet I have known and admired you at a distance for some time. At Tin Cup I used to attend the theater almost every night, after your advent in the town, for the sole purpose of admiring your performance."

Mignon was surprised by this declaration, for the speaker did not look at all like a Western man, and she could not remember to have ever encountered him in the mining-camp.

The stranger was quick-witted enough to see that she was amazed by his words and so proceeded to explain.

"I presume that you cannot recall that you ever met me in the West," he continued. "And I do not wonder at it for I have changed greatly during the last few years. Then I was a beardless, overgrown boy, and, owing to circumstances, was compelled to keep in the background; now I am my own master, free to do as I please."

The young actress did not know exactly what to say, for she could not see that the matter interested her at all, so she simply nodded assent.

"I do not doubt that this seems rather mysterious to you, but when I mention my name you will comprehend why it was that in Colorado I was not able to come forward and endeavor to procure the pleasure of your acquaintance."

Again the young actress nodded, more and more puzzled.

"I am called Moses Doffheimer."

Mignon was decidedly surprised by this announcement, for it was entirely unexpected, yet now that she knew who the young man was, and took a good look at his face she could readily see that he bore considerable resemblance to the dead millionaire, but she judged that in all respects he was a far weaker man than his father, for there were no signs in his countenance of the dogged determination which was so great a characteristic of the elder Doffheimer.

The blood of the actress detective leaped quickly within her veins, for she regarded this meeting with the young man as being remarkably fortunate, for she had made up her mind to become acquainted with both the son and daughter of the dead millionaire, and she expected to have trouble in getting on familiar terms with them.

Surely Dame Fortune was signally favoring her in thus giving her an opportunity to accomplish her wish.

So Mignon put on her sweetest smile, and beamed on the young man as though she regarded him as the dearest friend she had in the world.

"I am very glad, indeed, to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance," she declared. "I have often heard of you but we never chanced to meet."

"That was because the governor—my father, you know—seemed to take a delight in keeping me in the background," the young man explained. "And then, too, the old gentleman was so great an admirer of yours that he most certainly would have been angry if he had known that I dared to worship at the same shrine," and the young man accompanied the words with a gallant bow.

Mignon smiled in her most captivating manner.

"Really, it seems to me that your father was inclined to be unreasonable," she remarked.

"Oh, yes, he was, decidedly so, but this is not a fitting place for an explanation," the young man observed, with a glance around.

"It is rather early for a lunch, but if you

will join me in a light repast at Delmonico's, I will have an opportunity to explain at leisure."

"I shall be delighted," Mignon responded, immediately. "I rose quite early this morning, and as I only took a cup of coffee and a roll for my breakfast, I will be able to enjoy a lunch."

"How very lucky!" the young man exclaimed.

And then he hailed a passing cab, assisted the young actress to enter it, and ordered the man to drive to the famous up-town restaurant.

The vehicle rattled over the pavement at a good rate of speed, for with the air of a prince, young Doffheimer had told the driver that he did not want the horse to go to sleep on the way, so the conditions were not favorable for conversation, and only a few words passed between the two during the ride.

But after the pair were seated at a table in a cozy corner of the restaurant with an elaborate lunch spread out before them, young Doffheimer began his explanation.

"My father was a very peculiar man in a great many respects, as you are probably aware," he observed.

"Yes, although my acquaintance with him was such a limited one, that I really did not know much about him," Mignon remarked.

"I am aware of that fact. My father took a great fancy to you, but you did not take any particular interest in him, a circumstance which was a source of wonderment to the governor."

"I know it," Mignon responded, dryly. "The trouble with your father was that, like a great many men, he placed too much reliance in the power of money."

"Now, while it is true that money can aid a man to do a great many things in this world, yet there are times when a ton of gold will not help a man to gain his object any more than a ton of lead."

"Your father was one of the great mining magnates while I was only an actress, dependent upon her daily labors for her daily bread, yet I am so constituted that the fact of your father having a great deal of money did not make any more impression upon me than if he had been one of the poorest men in the camp."

"Yes, and he did not understand why it was that his wealth did not make you look with a favorable eye upon him."

"You must understand that this fancy that the old gentleman had for you was no mere passing whim," the young man explained. "As they say in the West, he meant business, every time! and from the night when he first saw you upon the stage in Tin Cup I am sure he would have been ready to marry you at a moment's notice."

The actress laughed.

"I suppose I ought to feel flattered," she remarked. "For it is not often that a millionaire condescends to marry a poor stage player, but, somehow, I do not."

"You are one of the kind of girls who care more for the man than for his money."

"Oh, I do not claim to be a paragon in any way, but to my thinking a woman who marries a man whom she does not love, simply because he has money, really sells herself into the worst kind of slavery."

"And you do not think then that my father would have ever succeeded in gaining your affections?"

"I am quite sure of it!" Mignon responded in a positive way. "In the first place he was entirely too old for me. I am a young woman and I do not want to marry a man old enough to be my father."

"I do not blame you, for I think I can understand just how you feel about the matter," the gentleman observed. "Now if I was a poor young man instead of being a rich one, I think I should hesitate some time before I would agree to marry an old woman, no matter how rich she was."

"Well, that was the way I felt about the matter, and I did not hesitate to tell your father so right at the beginning, but as he was one of the obstinate kind of men who are not willing to take no for an answer it did not discourage him as it ought to have done, for he persisted in forcing upon me attentions which were extremely unwelcome."

"Yes, you are right, my father was a remarkably obstinate man," young Doffheimer remarked in a reflective way. "And he rather took pride in being so. It was his boast that he never knew when he was beaten, and when he set his mind upon gaining any particular object he never allowed himself to be discouraged by any obstacles which might be in the way."

"Well, of course, men of that kind have succeeded in accomplishing wonders, but your father would never have succeeded in getting me to marry him if we had both lived until doomsday!" Mignon declared.

"I do not doubt that," young Doffheimer responded. "For I am satisfied that you could be just as obstinate in your way as my father was in his."

"And it was really strange, too, how set he was in this purpose, for, as a rule, he was not a man who was particularly partial to women, and as he had been a widower for so long—my

mother died nearly twenty years ago—every one believed that he would not marry again, so it is plain that you must have been extremely attractive, or else the old gentleman would never have fallen a victim to your charms," Doffheimer remarked in a laughing way.

"Much obliged for the compliment," Mignon replied, with a laugh and a graceful bow. "But I can assure you that I did not attempt to attract his attention in any way."

"He was introduced to me with a great flourish, as being one of the wealthiest men in the West," she continued. "And as millionaires are few and far between in Colorado I looked forward with considerable interest to the meeting, but I hadn't any idea of attempting to captivate the man, for I am a rather peculiar sort of girl, you see; one of the kind who does not care for admirers, and not particularly fond of the soft nonsense which is agreeable to the average girl."

"Oh, yes, although I did not enjoy the pleasure of your acquaintance, I knew that you were odd and peculiar from what I heard my father and his associates say," the young man remarked.

"Possibly it was because you were odd and different from the majority of women that my father was attracted to you," Doffheimer suggested.

"Perhaps so."

"And I am sure that is the reason why I took an interest in you," he remarked.

"I was a regular patron of the theater," the young man continued. "For in a town like Tin Cup that was about the only place where a fellow could pass his evenings, and I must admit that I was about as ardent an admirer as you had, but owing to the circumstances of the case I was compelled to remain in the background, for as soon as I discovered that the governor was infatuated I understood that it would not do to allow him to know that I admired you."

"It would hardly be proper to attempt to rival your own father," Mignon remarked, with a charming smile.

"The old gentleman would never have forgiven me," young Doffheimer replied. "And in a case of the kind he would have been terribly enraged, and as I was utterly dependent upon him I dared not do anything calculated to give offense."

"My father was a very odd man in a great many respects; he was a self-made man and was rather inclined to look with contempt upon the idea that a college education was valuable to young men, so, although the expense would have been only a trifle to him, he never sent me to college, and as soon as I had received a common-school education he made me his clerk, which was a fortunate circumstance as events proved, for when his death took place so suddenly, his affairs most certainly would have been thrown into confusion if I have not been perfectly familiar with all the business transactions."

"That was certainly fortunate."

"Yes, and now that I am my own master I am going to close up the business as soon as possible," the young man answered.

"My father made a regular slave of himself," he continued. "And I can assure you that I do not intend to do anything of the kind."

"My sister agrees with me in regard to this. We have money enough, and as I have been a regular drudge ever since I was fourteen years old, I think that it is about time I enjoyed myself a little."

"Yes, I should think so," Mignon assented in a sympathizing way.

"I am different in a great many ways from my father," the young man explained. "He was a regular money-grubber, and was only happy when over head and ears in business; the more money he made the more he wanted, and it was his ambition to rank with the great money kings of the world; I do not doubt either that he would have succeeded in this desire if his life had not been so suddenly cut short."

"Oh, it was really too dreadful!" the young actress exclaimed. "And I do not suppose that you have any idea in regard to the murderer?"

"No, I have not the slightest suspicion, and the detectives seem to be all at sea too," young Doffheimer replied.

"Our offer of ten thousand dollars for the apprehension of the criminal woke up all the detectives in the city, both professional and amateur, and fully a dozen have called on me this morning, anxious to secure points, as they express it, but, of course, I cannot give them any information, for I do not know anything more about the matter than anybody else."

"I suppose they surmised that your father may have been murdered by some personal enemy," Mignon suggested.

"A man situated as he was must have made a great many foes," she continued.

"I know something about his business matters, you see," Mignon added. "For during my stay in the mining-camp I heard a great many stories about his mining operations."

"Oh, yes, the governor had lots of enemies," the son admitted. "He was very bold and reckless in his speculations, and never hesitated

to go ahead for fear of treading on somebody's toes."

"That was my idea, and I had a thought that some desperate man, who had reason to wish for revenge upon your father, had struck this fearful blow."

Young Doffheimer shook his head slowly.

"I do not doubt that there are dozens of fellows out in Colorado who would have been only too glad to get a whack at the governor, if they could have arranged the affair so they could not have been caught, but I do not know any one particular man upon whom to fix suspicion, and this is exactly what I told the detectives when they tried to get some information out of me."

"I understand men have made vague threats of what they would do to your father if they ever got a good chance, but none of them took measures to carry out their threats."

"Yes, that is it, and as I told the detectives, when I spoke of this Western business, it did not seem likely that any Colorado man would take the trouble to come to New York for the express purpose of murdering my father, when the fellow could have secured a much better chance to satisfy his vengeance in the West."

"That is certainly true," Mignon observed, in a thoughtful way.

"So it does not seem probable to me that my father fell by the hand of a Westerner whom he had wronged in a mining deal."

"Possibly there is a woman in the case," the young actress suggested.

"I know, from the persistent way in which your father pursued me with his attentions, that he was a man who, when he had once set his heart on winning a woman, would not be apt to count the obstacles in his path, and it may be possible that he fell by the hand of some jealous rival."

"Yes, it is possible, but not very probable, to my thinking," the son replied.

"As far as my knowledge goes, you are the only lady to whom he has taken a fancy in years, and I do not believe there was another in the case," he continued.

"If there was he kept the matter so quiet that no one knows anything about it."

"Well, it seems to me that if there had been any one, you would surely have found some reference to the affair in his papers after your father's death," Mignon observed in a reflective way.

"Oh, yes, undoubtedly, but there wasn't any woman in the case. I am satisfied that the affair cannot be explained in that way," young Doffheimer declared, decidedly.

"The murder is the darkest kind of a mystery and it looks more to me like the work of a madman who struck at random, without knowing or caring, whom he killed, than anything else."

"It certainly is a most incomprehensible affair," Mignon assented.

"But do not let us converse any more upon this gloomy subject," the young man remarked.

"As yet I have not said a word in regard to the matter which I so earnestly desired to speak to you about."

"Explain at once then, I beg!" the young actress exclaimed with a charming smile.

"As I hinted at the beginning of this interview, you did not possess a more devoted admirer in Tin Cup than myself," Doffheimer declared.

"But as I told you I did not dare to express the admiration which I felt on my father's account, but now that I am my own master, possessed of ample wealth, and with no one to call me to an account, I am free to do as I like, and so have no hesitation in avowing myself a suitor for your hand."

"Really, this is so sudden," Mignon remarked, casting down her eyes and affecting to be confused.

"Well, I suppose that you are rather taken by surprise," the young man remarked.

"Yes, for it is so entirely unexpected."

"I can understand why my father's attentions were not acceptable to you," Doffheimer observed. "He was an old man—old enough to be your father, and it is no wonder that you did not fancy such a husband."

"Oh, yes, he was entirely too old for me, and I never could have made up my mind to marry him, no matter how rich he was."

"As far as age is concerned I am all right, and although I am not as rich as the old gentleman was, for his wealth was divided between my sister and myself, yet I am a millionaire, so no objection can be found to me on the score of money."

"Certainly not!" Mignon declared. "A gentleman with as much money as you possess need not hesitate to woo any girl in the country."

"Will my addresses be acceptable to you then?" the young man inquired.

"Well, at the present moment I do not see any reason to discourage you," the girl remarked, assuming to be considerably confused. "But it is all so sudden that I must have time to consider the matter. You are a stranger to me and until I get acquainted with you I will not be able to tell whether I like you well enough to marry you or not."

"That is reasonable, and I have no fault to

find," the young man observed. "And I will be glad to give you every opportunity to become acquainted with me."

"Suppose you accept the hospitality of my house for a while. I will introduce you to my sister as a friend of my father's from the West, and I know she will be delighted to entertain you."

"She has never been further West than Chicago so it is not likely that she will know what profession you have followed, particularly as she seldom goes to the theater."

"If you introduce me as Mignon Lawrence she might suspect that I was the actress who figured so conspicuously at the inquiry," the girl suggested.

"Yes, it is probable that she might come to that conclusion," Doffheimer assented.

"But that difficulty is easily gotten over," the girl remarked.

"As you have probably suspected, Mignon Lawrence is not my right name," she continued. "I am the daughter of one of the most eminent ministers that New York has ever known, and, of course, during the lifetime of my father—he is not living now—I did everything in my power to keep the world from suspecting that the child of a man following such a holy calling had adopted the stage life for a vocation."

"Ah, yes, I understand. Well, then, I can introduce you by your real name, and no one will be likely to suspect your secret."

"My right name is Lecount."

"When will you come?"

"As soon as you please."

So it was settled that on the morrow the actress-detective was to take up her quarters in the Doffheimer mansion and this ended the interview.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MINING SYNDICATE.

UPON the directory of one of the large office-buildings in the neighborhood of Wall street, New York's great money center, appears a line which says that "The Colorado Syndicate" occupies rooms Number 40 and 41, on the third floor.

Forty was the outside apartment, where visitors were received by a boyish-looking clerk, whose dark skin, jet-black hair and eyes indicated that he was of foreign extraction.

Jules Lemaire he was called, and although he had not yet reached man's estate, yet he was regarded by his employers as being a particularly valuable fellow.

The Colorado Syndicate was known in Wall street as the Silver Triumvirate, because it was composed of three men, and they were interested mainly in silver-mines.

Barnabas Doffheimer had been the head of the three, and his partners were two well-known Western men, veterans who had grown gray in the mining business.

The first was General Lysander Purvis, a big, pompous man of sixty, with a flowing gray beard and long hair of the same hue, a Kentuckian with all the stately dignity so common to the educated gentlemen of the famous Blue Grass State, equally renowned for the beauty of its women, the speed of its horses, and the courtesy and valor of its sons.

The last partner was an undersized, dried-up sort of a man, Judge Andrew Jackson Jones by name, a piece of Connecticut hardware, reputed to be one of the shrewdest lawyers in the Nutmeg State, a man who had acquired considerable notoriety by being mixed up in certain election cases, where by the use of some cunning tricks, which a conscientious lawyer would have disdained to use, he had managed to win a victory for his side.

The general and the judge met at the door and ascended to their offices in company.

They passed through the outer office and entered the inner one; the judge seated himself at the desk, where the clerk had placed the morning mail, and proceeded to open the letters, while the general bestowed his huge limbs in an easy-chair, and lighting a fragrant cigar, prepared to make himself comfortable.

"Here is a letter from young Doffheimer," the judge remarked, after perusing the first letter which he opened.

"Well, what does he have to say for himself?" the general inquired.

"He accepts our terms and is prepared to close the matter on receipt of our check."

"That is all right!" the general exclaimed, with an air of satisfaction. "I thought he would accept from the conversation that I had with him."

"He thinks he has got money enough," Purvis continued. "And does not care to keep on in active business, so is willing to close the whole thing out if he can get anything like a fair price."

"Yes, it is the old story; the father makes the money and the son spends it," the judge remarked.

"That is true in most instances, but I do not believe that Moses will make ducks and drakes of the old man's money," the general declared.

He is not a particularly strong-minded young

man—not a marker to his father, who was a regular old bulldog, but there is nothing of the 'blood' about Moses, no disposition to go in and astonish the world by the display of his cash; in fact, he is rather inclined to be mean and close, and I should not be surprised, as his money is all well-invested, if he succeeded in holding on to his wealth."

"What a pity it was that Doffheimer died," the judge observed with a solemn shake of the head.

"Everything was going on so nicely. He was just the man to plan a big campaign, and with us to aid him in carrying out the operations, we stood a good chance to make a success out of it in nine cases out of ten."

"Oh, yes, that is true; inside of ten years, with any ordinary kind of luck, we stood a chance to make a dozen millions in addition to what we have already got."

"Well, there is no use of crying over spilled milk," the judge observed with the air of a philosopher. "We must do the best we can under the circumstances, but although we are rated as shrewd and able men, well-calculated to hold our own under ordinary conditions with our business rivals, yet there is no doubt that neither one of us can play the bold and desperate game which 'Doffheimer indulged in with such success.'"

"Very true, very true!" the general assented. Doffheimer was a great genius in certain respects. When he conceived an idea he went straight on to carry it out regardless of the obstacles in the way, and the combinations which he formed were really wonderful.

"No, you and I can't work the game as he used to do," the general declared with a reflective air and a weighty shake of the head as he leaned back in his chair, puffing away at his cigar.

"Ah, he was a great man in certain respects, no mistake about that!" Purvis continued.

"How magnificently he used to sweep onward to his goal without any regard for the men who were in the path. He knocked them out of the way, as though he was some mighty giant and they were only paltry pigmies!"

"Yes, he usually carried matters with a high hand," the judge remarked, and then he shook his head in a doubtful way.

"Don't you think that he made a mistake though in going ahead quite so recklessly," the judge asked.

"Well, I don't know but what he did," the general replied, after thinking over the matter for a moment.

"It is my impression that he was killed by some man whom he had ruined, and if he had not been so reckless, and regardless of the consequences, he might be alive to-day."

"Very true; it certainly does look that way. There is no denying that he went on with a total indifference as to whether there was anybody in the way or not."

"And some man who did not relish being trampled to the dust turned and struck him."

"The chances are that your surmise is correct although the affair is such a mysterious one that it is hard to say why the deed was committed."

Then the judge turned again to his letters, and as he opened each one he conversed with his partner in regard to the missive.

At last but one remained unopened upon the desk, and as the judge's eyes fell upon it an exclamation of surprise escaped from him.

"What is it?" asked the general, understanding that there must be something queer about the appearance of the letter to so move the phlegmatic judge.

"Here is a letter addressed in lead-pencil to the Colorado Syndicate, with our street and number correctly given, but the characters are printed, not written, just as though it was the work of some child."

"That is an old idea," the general remarked. "Somebody wants to say something disagreeable to us, and is afraid of being tracked and caught if he uses ink, so he disguises his hand by this simple device."

"Open it and see what the critter has to say for himself!"

The judge obeyed the injunction; and as he perused the letter the general looked on with a languid sort of curiosity.

"Well, really, I do not know exactly what to make of this!" the judge remarked, his face dark with thought.

"What is it about?"

"Read for yourself!"

The general took the letter and as he glanced at the commencement a look of amazement appeared on his face.

"Well, well, what does this mean?" he exclaimed.

And then he began to read the epistle aloud, evidently both amazed and interested.

As the judge had said in regard to the direction upon the envelope, the letter was in rudely traced, printed letters, but perfectly legible.

"Is it right to kill the soul with the body?" the general commenced.

"This is a question which has troubled me greatly ever since I struck the fatal blow which laid Barnabas Doffheimer low." Great heavens!" cried General Purvis, excitedly. "Is it possible that this is a bona fide letter from the

miserable assassin who shed the blood of our partner?"

"It certainly seems to be a genuine letter, still it may be that it is only the work of some crank, eager to become mixed up in the affair, or some practical jester is going in for a joke at our expense," the judge remarked.

"Of course either one of those surmises may be true, but let us see what else the man has to say for himself," the general observed, evidently very much impressed by the letter.

"When I made up my mind to strike the blow of vengeance I never once thought of the man's soul."

"The fierce thirst for blood was on me, and I never stopped to think whether it was right or wrong to send the man, without warning and totally unprepared, to meet the Great Judge who gives the final, everlasting sentence."

"All that I thought of was that Barnabas Doffheimer was a guilty wretch who richly deserved to die, and if I could have only taken his life by sacrificing my own I would have gladly performed the task, but under the circumstances it was imperative that I should not die in accomplishing the mission of vengeance, for Doffheimer's death was but the beginning of the end."

"There is a bloodthirsty scoundrel for you!" the judge exclaimed.

"Oh, yes, he is a regular out and outer, as the Englishmen say," the general replied.

"There were three of you—three human vampires, who lived by preying upon men weaker than yourselves."

"Now there are only two—the chief of your thieving, murdering gang, the ruthless, iron-will, iron-hearted Doffheimer has been sent to his long home by my avenging steel, but now that the deed is done I regret that I did not give him time to prepare his soul for the other world."

"I am satisfied that I ought not to have slain both soul and body at one stroke."

"Hang me! if the fellow doesn't argue the matter as though he was a minister engaged in a theological discussion!" the judge exclaimed, with contracted brows.

"Oh, yes, as the boys say, he is a daisy and no mistake!" the general commented, and then went on again with the reading of the letter.

"There are three of you—the Silver Triumvirate—who have carried matters with so high a hand, and been so successful that I do not wonder you have been lulled into the belief that you were more like gods than men, but my steel has translated the chief of your gang to another world, thus giving convincing proof that you are only humans and not immortals, and I write this to give you warning that the same death awaits both of you, bull-like, blustering general, and tricky, snaky judge, that befell your companion."

"I wish to give you time to make your peace with this world, and prepare for the next."

"Do not delay, for the arm of the avenger may strike you down at any time; having once tasted blood I am thirsty for more."

"The atrocious scoundrel!" the judge exclaimed, pale with rage, in which there was commingled considerable fear.

"Upon my word! I would gladly give a thousand dollars to know that this rascal was safely lodged in jail!" he declared.

"And I feel that I will not be content to allow you much time for preparation, so be speedy, as the blow may fall at any moment."

Having come to the end of the letter, the general laid it upon his knee and looked at the judge in a questioning way.

Jones shook his head, and it was plain that he was both puzzled and disturbed.

"Of course this may be a joke, but, somehow, I have got the idea that it is genuine," the judge remarked.

"If it is, the writer is a crank of the first water, and if we are not careful we may meet the same fate as our partner."

The judge's cheeks paled at the suggestion.

"One advantage, though, we have over Doffheimer in this matter," Jones suggested. "We have been duly warned, and so can look out for ourselves, while he was taken completely by surprise."

"True, but in a matter of this kind we need the advice of an expert, and so I suggest that we send for a detective," the general remarked.

"That man whom we had before seemed to be an able fellow: Phenix, you know."

"Yes, yes, send for him at once!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE MAN-HUNTER'S ADVICE.

AS it happened, Joe Phenix was in his office when the syndicate's messenger came, and so he was able to wait upon the disturbed two at once.

The detective was ushered into the private office, provided with a chair, and then the general remarked:

"I presume, Mr. Phenix, that you are acquainted with all the particulars of the melancholy death of our late partner, Mr. Doffheimer?"

"Oh, yes, any one who reads the newspapers at all attentively could not help being posted in all the details of the murder."

"So far, neither the regular detectives from Headquarters, nor the private men, who have undertaken the case in the hopes to secure the large rewards offered for the apprehension of the murderer, have succeeded in getting a clue."

"The affair is an uncommonly mysterious one," the veteran detective observed.

"It is my opinion that the assassin was entirely alone, had no accomplices, and therefore if he is not careful to make any false moves it will be a difficult matter to get a clue to him."

"Just cast your eyes over this letter, which we received this morning, and tell us what you think about it," General Purvis remarked, handing the mysterious letter to Joe Phenix as he spoke.

With careful earnestness the man-hunter read the letter from the beginning to the end, the partners watching him with anxious eyes.

"What do you think of it?" the general asked, as Joe Phenix lifted his gaze from the epistle.

"Well, it is my impression that it is a genuine letter—that is that it was really written by the man who killed Doffheimer," the veteran detective replied, slowly.

"The judge and myself did not really know what to make of it, and he had an idea that some practical joker was endeavoring to have a little fun at our expense," the general observed.

"I do not think so; it appears to me that there is a peculiar earnestness about the letter which suggests that the man who wrote it is no joker."

"You incline to the belief then that the letter is genuine—that it comes from the wretch who killed Doffheimer?" the general asked.

"Such is my impression at present," the detective replied.

"The general and I discussed the matter, and the thought occurred to us that some crank might have written the letter just for the sake of being mixed up with the affair," the judge remarked.

"That supposition is not an improbable one," Joe Phenix remarked.

"All great cities possess a number of men who are a little weak in the upper story, and when an affair of this kind takes place some of them are seized with a great desire to have a finger in the pie, as you suggest."

"And there is another solution of the riddle," the acute detective continued.

"New York is the headquarters of a gang of men who live by their wits; they are always on the look-out for an opportunity to make a stake, and the games which they play are wonderfully shrewd."

"Now it is possible that some of these fellows have come to the conclusion that there is a chance for them to make something out of this affair."

"Yes, but I don't see where the rascals are going to come in!" the general exclaimed.

"I can quickly explain that," Joe Phenix replied. "This letter speaks of vengeance being taken for a wrong which you and your associates have done."

"Oh, yes, the writer is hot for vengeance, and nothing but our lives will satisfy the scoundrel," the judge remarked.

"Exactly; well, if the missive comes from some fellow in the blackmailing line, who is anxious to make a stake, in a day or two you will receive another letter from him, and this time he will inform you that he has come to the conclusion that blood enough has been shed; having killed Doffheimer he is content to stop, but as you two had a share in Doffheimer's guilt you must give up some of your ill-gotten gains."

"Yes, yes, I see the game now!" the general exclaimed. "If we are willing to pay him a good round sum he will be satisfied, and we can go on our ways without fear of the assassin's knife."

"It may be that the man is trying to work some scheme of the kind," Joe Phenix observed. "But I do not think it is very likely though, for I have a decided belief that the writer of this letter is the man who killed your associate."

"It is your opinion then that there is great danger of our being attacked at some time," the judge remarked, evidently very much alarmed.

"Yes, I think so," Joe Phenix replied without hesitation.

"While there isn't any doubt in my mind that the writer of the letter is a crank, yet I feel equally sure he is a dangerous one, and I think it is almost certain that he will attempt to kill both of you just as he killed Doffheimer," he continued.

"An extremely unpleasant prospect!" the general declared.

"Oh, yes, and now the question arises, what are we going to do about it?" the judge asked.

Despite the fact that he bore the name of the sturdy old war-horse, Andrew Jackson, the judge was decidedly timid when it came to a question of personal danger.

"We must take measures to meet the danger, of course," the general remarked.

"I do not think it is likely that you will be attacked for two or three days," the detective observed.

"The fellow has thoughtfully given you time to prepare to make your exit from this world of strife, and he would hardly come to the conclusion that you could make yourselves ready in less than two or three days."

"My dear Mr. Phenix, it is my judgment that it would not be safe to rely upon his implied assurance that we should have time to prepare ourselves!" the judge exclaimed in a nervous way.

"I think there is danger that we may be attacked at any moment," Jones continued. "And we would be very careless indeed if we do not take immediate measures to protect ourselves."

"Oh, yes, I agree with you in regard to that," the detective replied.

"When a man is dealing with a crank of this kind it is well to take all possible precautions."

"What would you advise?" the general asked.

"In my judgment there are two points to be covered," Joe Phenix replied.

"First and foremost your persons must be protected from the assassin's knife."

"Yes, yes, that is the principal thing, of course!" the judge exclaimed, emphatically.

"No doubt about that," the general assented.

"For if the scoundrel succeeds in 'wiping us out,' as they say in the West, that ends our interest in the game."

"Yes, I fully comprehend that," Joe Phenix assented. "First I will make provision for your safety, and then the next thing is to catch the man."

"Exactly! by Jove! I would be willing to give a good round sum to put the scoundrel behind the prison bars!" the general declared.

"So would I—so would I!" the judge asserted.

"We give you full authority to go ahead without regard to the expense, you understand, Mr. Phenix," the judge continued.

"Oh, yes, the question of money doesn't extend into the affair at all," the general asseverated.

"We want the man captured, and hang the expense!"

"Yes, yes, that is it!" the judge joined in. "Put the scoundrel in jail so that he can be punished for his crime, and we will not grumble at the cost, no matter how expensive it may be."

This speech showed that the judge was thoroughly frightened, for it was well known that Jones was a great lover of money, notwithstanding that he had plenty, and he usually kept a tight hold on his cash.

"You can rely upon my doing my best to capture the man," Joe Phenix remarked. "But, as I remarked, the first thing is to look after your safety, and I think I can arrange the matter so that my men, while they are occupied in guarding you, will also be able to arrest the fellow if he attempts to make any attack."

"Yes, yes, I comprehend!" the general observed. "And it seems to me that the idea is a capital one."

"Yes, yes, very good indeed," the judge assented. "But the main point is to arrange the matter so that the scoundrel will not get a chance to damage us."

"The best way to arrange the matter will be for me to assign two of my best men, one to each of you gentlemen, as a personal guard," the veteran detective explained. "So that no matter where you may be, at home or abroad, a trusty man, well-armed, will be always by your side ready to protect you from an attack."

The partners signified their approval of this arrangement, and the general said in conclusion:

"If the rascal succeeds in doing us any damage while we are so carefully guarded, it will be proof positive that he is really a superhuman scoundrel."

"Yes, I think the move will be a check to his operations," Joe Phenix observed.

"And now, gentlemen, possibly you can give me some information which may aid me to get a clue to this party," the detective continued.

"We will be delighted to do so, of course, if we can," the general replied.

"The writer of the letter is evidently under the impression that he has been deeply wronged by you gentlemen acting as a syndicate," the detective remarked.

"Now, if you could fix upon some particular business transaction during the past few years, wherein you gentlemen succeeded in coming out very much ahead of somebody else, I might be able to make a shrewd guess in regard to the identity of the writer of this letter, and the slayer of Doffheimer."

The general and the judge exchanged glances, and both seemed to be a trifle embarrassed.

"Ah, well, the fact is we have never had any trouble with anybody in the East," the general remarked, in a rather evasive way.

"You must not think, gentlemen, that I have any desire to pry into your business matters," Joe Phenix observed, perceiving immediately that for some reason the pair were reluctant to give him the information.

"But it is absolutely necessary for me to gain some knowledge which will give me a clue to this secret murderer," he continued.

"The man believes that he has been so deeply

wronged by you that only the deaths of all three can satisfy him, and I should think that by looking back over your business transactions you would be able to fix upon some particular one wherein some man got so much the worst of the fight that he might be impelled to seek for revenge in this desperate way."

"Well, really, Mr. Phenix, to tell you the truth, although we have never had any trouble in the East, either personally, or as a syndicate, yet in Colorado the men acting under our orders have had a dozen ugly contests," the general explained slowly and with evident reluctance.

"We were dealing with a lot of ignorant miners out there, you understand, Mr. Phenix," the judge remarked in his blandest and smoothest tones.

"Men, you comprehend, Mr. Phenix, who not only knew absolutely nothing about the law, but had the most supreme contempt for judges, juries and all the ordinary machinery of law courts," the wily old lawyer continued.

"A lot of bull-headed, obstinate heathen, who after they were beaten in the courts made up their minds to hang on to the property in dispute despite the orders of the court to surrender the mines," the general explained.

"Of course, under such circumstances our agents were compelled to use force to gain possession of the properties," the judge went on in his soft, oily way.

"The regular officers of the law, the sheriffs, were powerless and could not do anything, for in this wild western region public opinion was all on the side of the rough desperadoes who had set themselves up in opposition to the law, and so we were forced to raise regular armies in order to gain possession of our property."

"Ah, yes, I comprehend," Joe Phenix remarked.

And comprehend he did much more fully than the intriguing speculators had any notion.

With lawyer-like ability, despite their possible explanation, which did not at all explain, Joe Phenix conjectured what was the truth in regard to these cases.

The reputation that the Silver Triumvirate possessed—their nick-name "mine-wreckers," was well known to him.

By hook or crook they succeeded in getting a claim to valuable mining properties without going through the formality of paying out much money, then they contrived to get into a lawsuit with the original owners, and by the aid of able, unscrupulous lawyers, managed to get the best of the legal fight, so acquiring a title to property which really belonged to somebody else.

No wonder that the men, thus really robbed of their property under cover of the law, should be inclined to be violent, and take the notion into their head to resist the execution of the law's mandates by force of arms.

The veteran detective realized that he was conversing with a couple of men who were not any better than a pair of robbers, although they had always been careful to keep within the letter of the law, while they had violated the spirit of it a dozen times.

And now that one of their victims had taken the notion into his head to take the law in his own hands they were cowering in terror.

But as the detective realized that this sort of thing was possible because the state of the world was not yet perfect, and as he was not a knight-errant—a modern champion, whose mission it was to go about reforming such abuses, he made no comment upon the matter, but was content to set to work to save this precious pair from the merciless demon which their own acts had brought to life.

"This mysterious assassin is probably some man who was mixed up in these quarrels," the detective remarked.

"Can't you call to mind some particular man who might have been rendered desperate enough by your getting the best of him to go in for a bit of vengeance of this kind?" Joe Phenix asked.

The general looked at the judge, the judge looked at the general, and then both shook their heads with owl-like gravity.

"Well, really no, at present I can't say that I can fix my mind on any one particular man, eh, judge?" the general observed.

"No, I am quite sure I cannot," the old lawyer declared.

"The fact is, you see, my dear Mr. Phenix, neither the general or myself ever took an active part in these matters," Jones went on in explanation.

"Doffheimer always took charge of such affairs," he continued. "Still, we had a general knowledge of what took place, of course."

"You see, Mr. Phenix, it was never our game to come to an actual fight if it could possibly be avoided," the general asserted.

"We were all three peaceable, law-abiding citizens, and we did not want the blood of any man upon our hands," the judge remarked, with a great show of innocent candor.

"When we got mixed up in one of these troubles, and found that it would be necessary to use force to gain possession of our property, we always made a point to get together so great a

number of men as to give the defenders of the position the idea that it would be the height of folly to attempt to resist, and then at the last moment, just as we had got all ready to attack, we invariably made it a rule to offer a compromise—we would pay a certain sum of money if the men would surrender the property, and so avoid bloodshed."

"You see, my dear Mr. Phenix, we were always disposed to do the square thing, even if all the advantages were on our side," the general announced in a grandiloquent way.

"The writer of the letter evidently considers that you have deeply injured him," the veteran detective remarked in a meditative way. "And it seems to me that if you had not trampled the man's right into the dust he would not be so eager in his desire for a vengeance which calls for the sacrifice of all your lives."

"Try and recall the past," Joe Phenix continued. "Was there not some case where there was bloodshed and loss of life?"

"Hem—on two or three occasions there was a fight"—the general remarked, slowly, evidently speaking with great reluctance, as though the subject was extremely distasteful to him.

"But as far as I can remember, no one was ever seriously hurt, either on one side or the other," the general continued.

"There was that Blue Eagle case," the judge suggested.

"Ah, yes, I had forgotten that affair, but I don't believe it has any connection with this case," the general asserted.

"The man was killed there, you know," the judge reminded.

"Very true, but as he was a crazy sort of fellow, without any relatives or friends, it is not likely that the Blue Eagle affair has anything to do with this one."

"It is hard to say," Joe Phenix remarked. "But it will not do any harm for you to relate the particulars."

"Oh, no, no harm, as far as I can see," the general responded.

"This Blue Eagle Mine was in the Tin Cup district," Purvis continued. "It was a small affair, and not regarded as being particularly valuable, but as it was situated between two mining properties that we owned, we came to the conclusion that it would be well for us to get hold of it."

"There were four men interested in the mine, and three of them we succeeded in buying out without any trouble, but the fourth man was an obstinate fellow, and as he wouldn't sell, we had to go to law with him in order to get him out."

"He was an ugly, impractical sort of fellow," the judge remarked. "A foreigner—a Frenchman, if I remember rightly, and he paid so little attention to the suit which we instituted against him that he never took the trouble to appear in court either in person or by counsel."

"Ignorant, unlettered men will act in that foolish way once in a while," the detective observed.

"Of course, under such circumstances the case was decided against him, and he was ordered to turn the property over to us upon the payment of a certain sum of money," the general explained.

"We really tried to do the fair thing by the man," the judge declared. "And the sum that we were ordered to pay by the court was actually every penny that the man's interest was worth."

"But, as the judge remarked, he was an impractical sort of a fellow, and did not want to give up his interest in the claim, court or no court, and so when the sheriff went to take possession of the property he found the Frenchman prepared for a fight."

The sheriff was a sensible sort of a fellow, and he tried to reason with the man, but he soon came to the conclusion that he might just about as well talk to a post, for the Frenchman declared he would never leave the mine alive."

"It was a very distressing affair and both the general and myself regretted the circumstances very much," the judge interposed. "And if we had been on the ground it is probable that we would not have allowed the sheriff to proceed to extremities, but Doffheimer was rather inclined to be hasty and bull-headed in an affair of this kind, and he defended his course afterward by saying in answer to our remonstrances that he was not the kind of man to be bull-dozed by any crazy Frenchman."

"The sheriff had his duty to perform, and when he found that the man was not inclined to listen to reason he went ahead and stormed the works," the general related.

"The Frenchman was an old man, I experienced in the use of weapons, and as the sheriff was an old war-horse he had no difficulty in capturing the mine," Purvis continued. "It was not his intention to kill the old man, but he had to disable him in order to prevent some of his own party from being injured, but under such circumstances as this it is not always possible for a man to do exactly as he intends, and the ball that was calculated to merely wound the Frenchman killed the man."

"Very unfortunate circumstance—very unfortunate indeed!" the judge declared. "And

the general and myself deeply regretted that the affair should have occurred, but Doffheimer was very stubborn, and very much inclined to want to have things his own way in his department, and he dismissed the matter with the remark that one crazy Frenchman more or less did not matter."

"I will do Doffheimer the credit of saying that he tried to do the square thing after the man was dead," the general remarked.

"He had him buried in good style, and went to considerable trouble to find his heirs so as to make a settlement with them, but was not able to find out anything about the history of the man. He was a stranger in the district, and all that anybody knew was that he was a Frenchman by birth, who had been so long in the country that he spoke English about as well as a native, but as he was a silent, reserved sort of man, who seldom spoke of his affairs to any one, there wasn't a soul in the neighborhood who could tell anything about him."

"His partners, whom we bought out, might have been able to give some information but they had all departed," the judge explained. "And though we went to considerable trouble in endeavoring to hunt them up we were not able to find any of them."

"How long ago did this affair happen?" Joe Phenix asked.

The detective had paid particular attention to the recital for he had an idea that it had an important bearing on the mystery which he was endeavoring to solve.

"Two or three years ago," the general replied. "Not recently, and that is why I do not think there can be any connection between that affair and this present mystery," Purvis answered.

"What was the name of the Frenchman?"

"Victor Grandtete," the general replied.

Joe Phenix entered the name in his note-book.

"Do you really think there is any connection between that affair and this one?" the general asked in an incredulous way.

"I have not formed any opinion in regard to the matter," the detective replied. "But if I should discover that the man had friends, or relatives, I certainly would suspect that they had something to do with this case."

"Yes, the inference would be natural," the judge remarked.

"I will send the two men who are to act as your guards, in an hour or so, therefore, if you discover that your are being shadowed by a couple of well-dressed men you will understand that the detectives are taking measures to guard you against an attack."

The pair expressed their satisfaction at this arrangement, and Joe Phenix departed.

CHAPTER X.

THE MESSAGE.

ON his way to his office the veteran detective meditated over the situation.

"If the pair have told me the truth about their operations, and I have no doubt that they have, for under the circumstances it would be the greatest kind of a blunder for them to attempt to deceive me, the Blue Eagle affair is the only one where they have actually killed a man in order to get hold of his property, so it would appear as if this man who is now so determined upon obtaining vengeance must have some connection with that tragedy," Joe Phenix remarked, communing with himself as he went on.

"Of course, it is possible that the fellow is a socialistic crank who may be 'going' for these millionaires on general principles," he continued.

"As they are very rich men he has jumped to the conclusion that they must have obtained their money by unfair means, and therefore they ought to be killed for the general good of society."

"I hardly think that is the truth though, and am much more inclined to believe the man has good grounds for the hatred which he bears to this Silver Syndicate."

Then a thought occurred to the man-hunter and he pondered over it for a few moments.

"Haven't I made a mistake in not taking measures to guard these men in their office?" he asked.

"The shadows will no doubt prove an effectual protection upon the street, but a desperate fellow of this kind when he finds there isn't a good chance for him to get at his men in public may come to the determination to attack them either in their office or at their homes."

"Decidedly I am making a mistake in not taking measures to guard against an attack in that direction."

And having come to this conclusion, Joe Phenix returned immediately to the office of the syndicate and explained to them his ideas on the subject.

They agreed with him that it would be wise to take the precaution, and it was arranged that the detective was to send one of his men who, in the disguise of a confidential man of business and private secretary combined, should keep watch and ward over the two.

The general and judge were in high glee.

"Decidedly, my dear Mr. Phenix, this fellow must be the very king of rascals if he is able to do any damage after you have taken all these precautions!" the general declared.

"The peculiar way in which he murdered Doffheimer shows that he is no ordinary scoundrel," the detective replied.

"A man of this kind who kills because he desires to satisfy a thirst for vengeance is much harder to trap than the common, every-day criminal, who follows in the well-defined path that a hundred others of his class have trodden before."

"A man of that kind is pretty certain to do as the others before him have done, and so the officers can get a good chance at him, but when it comes to a case of this kind it is not possible for any one to predict what course the fugitive will take and so the chance of catching him is not a brilliant one."

The others nodded assent, for being shrewd business men they fully understood the situation.

Joe Phenix then departed, and this time went straight to his office where he found Tony Western, the able lieutenant upon whom he placed so much reliance.

The veteran detective had made up his mind that Western was just the man to play the part of the confidential man of business, and when he explained the matter to him he found his satellite eager for action.

So Western was dispatched to the office of the Colorado Syndicate, and then Joe Phenix selected a couple of his best men to shadow the general and the judge.

The partners were on the alert when they went out to lunch in company with the "confidential man of business," anxious to discover whether the shadows were on guard or not, and experienced a deal of satisfaction when they found that a couple of well-dressed, resolute-looking men, who appeared capable of holding their own with the toughest kind of a customer, kept them company wherever they went, although not appearing to take any notice of them.

"Upon my word I must say that your Mr. Phenix certainly understands his business," the general remarked to Tony Western.

"Oh, yes, he knows how to pull the wires as well as any man in the detective profession," the lieutenant replied.

For three days this sort of thing went on without either the men who were watched, or the watchers discovering anything suspicious in the conduct of any of the people whom they encountered.

On the morning of the fourth day Joe Phenix was sent for in haste to come to the office of the syndicate.

In the private office of the firm sat the two partners, in company with Tony Western, contemplating a postal card which was upon the table.

"This came in our mail this morning," the general said, pointing to the postal-card.

The direction was penciled upon the card, not written but printed, and the communication was in the same style.

Joe Phenix read it aloud.

"All the private detectives in existence can not protect the guilty from the vengeance of the avenger. When the hour of doom approaches it is well for men to be prepared."

"What do you think of this peculiar communication?" the general asked, attempting to laugh, but it was in an extremely feeble, forced way.

"The fellow is an able rascal surely," the veteran detective replied. "But as I understood that from the beginning, it is not a surprise to me."

"He has evidently been on the watch for an opportunity to get in a blow at one of you," Joe Phenix continued. "And has been smart enough to discover that you were so well guarded that if he attempted to attack you he stood a good chance of being captured, and so has not dared to carry out his scheme of vengeance."

"Ah, yes, I understand; and as he cannot get at us he indulges in the luxury of sending a threatening message as the next best thing," the general remarked.

"Yes, that is about the idea," Joe Phenix replied.

"Don't you think the fellow intends to give us warning that our time is up, and that we may look for an attack at any moment?" the judge questioned, slowly.

"It is hard to come to a decision in regard to that," Joe Phenix answered.

"It may be that the man really desired to give you time to arrange your earthly affairs, and would not have attacked you even if you had not been guarded," the veteran detective continued.

"But his reference to the detectives would seem to say that he has been on the watch and has been shrewd enough to detect that you had taken measures to guard against an attack; and if he had no idea of troubling you it does not seem to me that he would have taken the trouble to play the spy upon your movements."

"Ah, yes, there certainly is a deal of reason in what you say," the general remarked. "And I haven't any doubt that you are correct in your

assumption that the rascal would have attacked us if we had not been protected by your men."

"He has given us fair warning now that he means business, and we must be on the alert," the judge observed, evidently a little nervous over the affair.

"I will caution my men to keep their eyes open," Joe Phenix declared. "And I could put on two more shadows if you considered it advisable."

The general looked at the judge in a questioning way.

"What do you think, Jones?" he asked.

"Well, I don't see as it would do any harm to take a little extra precaution," the judge replied in a reflective way.

"It may be possible, you know, that this fellow is a regular crank," Jones continued. "And he really meant what he said in his first communication about giving us time to settle our earthly affairs. These cranks, you know, do take just such queer notions into their heads."

"Oh, yes, it is possible, as I said, that the man would not have made an attack, even if you had not taken measures to guard against it," the detective remarked.

"But, it is a deuced sight better to be on the safe side!" the general declared. "And, acting on this idea, I would decidedly recommend the putting on of the two extra men, for it is our game, not only to frustrate the attack, but to capture the rascal, if he is bold enough to make an attempt to do us harm."

Joe Phenix said he would attend to the placing of the extra shadows and then took his departure.

When the partners went out for their lunch they noticed with a deal of satisfaction that there were now four men who managed to be near at hand wherever they went, and the general observed to the judge:

"The rascal must be uncommon smart if he is able to get a whack at us now."

Both the partners were keenly on the alert, and closely scrutinized everybody who came near, but despite their vigilance they were not successful in discovering anything calculated to arouse their suspicions.

And so matters went on for another three days, the confidential man of business was always with the partners, while the four shadows not only kept close watch upon the movements of the pair while they were abroad, but were relieved at night by four more men who went on duty in the neighborhood of the bachelor's flat, up-town, where the pair lived.

The general was a widower, while the judge had never been married, and so they occupied apartments in cor ' on.

But notwithstanding all this careful watch no trace of the mysterious writer of the threatening letter was discovered.

On the fourth day the partners began to feel a little more easy in their minds.

They had succeeded that morning in making a successful coup, the result of which added some fifty thousand dollars to their bank account, and, as was only natural under the circumstances, they felt very much elated.

The pair were men who believed in good living, and their lunch was always a pretty substantial meal, but on this occasion, in order to duly celebrate their triumph, they ordered an extra fine repast and washed it down with a couple of bottles of the best wine that the popular restaurant which they patronized could furnish.

Tony Western made one of the party, for the pair never stirred a foot abroad without being accompanied by the detective, and when the three returned to the office of the syndicate all of them felt in fine spirits, for there isn't anything like a good dinner, and a bottle of generous wine to make the average man feel at peace with himself and all the world.

The general had purchased a box of cigars that morning on his way down-town, ordering the dealer to be sure and have them delivered by noon without fail, so they would be on hand for an after-dinner smoke, and as soon as Purvis came into the office he inquired concerning the cigars.

"Yes, sir, they came right after you went out and I put the box in your desk," the clerk replied.

"Glad of it!" the general exclaimed, and then the three went to the inner office where they proceeded to make themselves comfortable.

The general opened the box of cigars, and as he did so made an explanation in regard to them.

"I had occasion to go to the island of Cuba a few years ago, having a little business deal to arrange with the proprietor of one of the largest cigar establishments there, and so had a chance to become posted in regard to the cigar business."

"This brand is an extra fine one, and suits my taste better than any other, although it is not so expensive as some of them."

"There are only a dozen cigars in each box and the boxes retail for six dollars, making the cigars cost a half apiece. Of course you can pay one or two dollars a cigar for the extra fancy brands, but these are really good enough for anybody."

Then he tendered the box to his partner and the detective both of whom helped themselves to a cigar.

At this moment the clerk came in with some mail matter and the general, feeling particularly generous just then, invited the young man to have one of the costly cigars.

The clerk accepted with thanks, returned to his desk in the outer apartment, and as the three lit their "weeds" they heard the clerk scratch a match, indicating that he was about to enjoy his treasure.

"It is not often, I'll bet, that he gets a chance at fifty-cent cigars," the general remarked with a deal of complacency, as he watched the smoke curl in the air.

"He is a faithful, industrious fellow and deserves a treat once in a while," the judge observed.

Then all three pulled away in solid enjoyment.

CHAPTER XI.

A TRAGEDY.

AN hour later Joe Phenix, enjoying an after-dinner cigar—he had taken a late lunch on account of being detained by business—was surprised to receive a letter which at the first glance he suspected came from the mysterious personage who had taken up the role of an avenger, for the inscription had been traced by a lead pencil and the letters were printed, not written.

The detective opened the letter; it only contained a single line, printed, like the inscription, with a lead pencil.

"One more, and one less! Go to the Colorado men at once!"

"What does this mean?" Joe Phenix exclaimed, springing to his feet, considerably disturbed.

"Can it be possible that the man has contrived to get at either the general or the judge in spite of all my precautions?"

And then the veteran detective hurried forth, eager to obey the injunction.

In five minutes he entered the building where the Colorado Syndicate had their office.

There was a group of excited men gathered in the main corridor, near the elevator.

One of the crowd was an acquaintance of Joe Phenix, a young broker.

"What is the matter?" the detective asked.

"Hav'n't you heard?" the man exclaimed in surprise. "Great heavens! it is a fearful tragedy! Judge Jones of the Colorado syndicate, a man worth ten or fifteen millions has committed suicide up-stairs in his office!"

"Is it possible?" Joe Phenix asked.

"Oh, yes, no doubt about it—one of the strangest affairs that has ever occurred!" the broker replied.

"The judge committed suicide by hanging himself to the chandelier in his private office. The police are in charge, and the coroner has been sent for."

"I came to see the judge on a little matter of business too," Joe Phenix explained. "And am astounded by this intelligence, but I presume I had better go up."

And so he took the elevator and ascended to the floor where the offices of the Colorado Syndicate were situated.

As the young broker had said, the police had taken possession of the offices and denied admission to any one pending the arrival of the doctors and the coroner, but as the captain of the precinct was there in person, and happened to be an old friend of the veteran detective, Joe Phenix had no difficulty in gaining entrance.

He found the general and Tony Western in the inner office where the body of the judge had been placed upon the lounge by the orders of the captain.

Both the general and Western were astounded by the tragedy, particularly as neither one could throw any light upon the mystery, for a deep and dark mystery indeed it was.

Joe Phenix was soon in possession of the story of the tragedy.

A gentleman—an old western friend of the partners—had called to see them in relation to some mining shares which he held.

Upon entering the office he was amazed to find the clerk was fast asleep, with his head on his desk; and it was only after considerable difficulty that the writer was able to rouse him, and then he seemed stupid, like a man who had been forced to go without sleep for a time and was now trying to make up for it.

Inquiring for the partners, the clerk, with a dazed air, directed him to the inner office, and upon entering the visitor was amazed by the sight which met his eyes.

In the center of the room, suspended by a small rope from the chandelier, hung the dead body of Judge Jones.

It appeared as if the judge got on the table, which was almost immediately under the chandelier, fastened the rope to the gas fixture, placed the other end, which was formed into a running noose, around his neck, then stepped off the table, and thus speedily swung himself into eternity.

Upon the lounge General Purvis lay, extended at full length and sound asleep.

In the opposite corner, seated by the general's desk and with his head bowed upon it, Tony Western was also buried in a profound slumber, and so deeply did the pair sleep that the visitor had fully as much trouble to wake them up as he had had in arousing the clerk.

Both were horrified, of course at the discovery that the judge had committed suicide.

The police were immediately sent for, and Western was about to dispatch a message to his chief, when Joe Phenix arrived.

Before the veteran detective had time to discuss the matter the coroner came, and, as he was a brisk, bustling sort of gentleman, full of genuine American "git up and git," to use the slang of the day, he immediately proceeded to impanel a jury and examine into the cause of the death.

The general and Western testified that the judge seemed to be in the best of spirits as they sat smoking their cigars and chatting together, then Purvis remarked that he felt extremely sleepy, and extended himself on the sofa, but, as he explained, he did not have any idea of going to sleep, but he presumed that he did drop off to sleep almost immediately, for he could not remember anything after stretching himself upon the sofa.

Western told a similar story.

He too had a sleepy fit, and laid his head upon the desk, thinking that the drowsiness would speedily pass away, and he knew nothing more until the visitor aroused him.

The general had explained that the three had indulged in an unusual hearty lunch with wine, and all the listeners immediately came to the conclusion that the trio had got "pretty full" of the wine, and this was why they were all troubled with the sleepiness.

A couple of doctors had come with the coroner—the three had been at lunch together when the summons came—and their examination revealed that the judge had died from strangulation.

It was a clear case of suicide, and the jury rendered a verdict accordingly, it being the universal opinion that it was but seldom that a man made so determined an attempt upon his own life.

The undertaker and his men removed the body, the crowd vacated the rooms, lingering outside in the corridor, though, to discuss the strange affair, and the general was left alone with the two detectives.

"Gentlemen, I am completely unnerved by this tragedy!" the general declared.

CHAPTER XII.

SEEKING THE TRUTH.

THE general sunk into a chair and ran his hands through his hair in a despairing way.

"Yes, such experiences are not pleasant," Joe Phenix remarked.

Then he noticed that the door which led into the outer office was not tightly closed.

He rose, proceeded to the door with a noiseless tread, and glanced through the crack.

The young clerk, with his head bowed upon his desk, had apparently gone off to sleep again.

Joe Phenix closed the door quietly, and then resumed his former position.

"Your young man outside acts as if he had been given a powerful dose of some narcotic calculated to speedily send a man into the realms of Nod, and to keep him there for a while, too," the veteran detective remarked.

"By Jove! Mr. Phenix, that is exactly the way I feel!" the general explained.

"Yes, that is just the sensation; no doubt about it!" Tony Western asserted. "And I begin to believe that we have all been dosed, though I don't exactly comprehend how the trick was worked."

"You had wine with your lunch?" Joe Phenix asked.

"Yes, a couple of bottles," the general replied. "But it is not possible that they could have been doctored. We lunched at Delmonico's, and it is absurd to think for an instant any one could get drugged wine there."

"It does not seem probable," Joe Phenix observed, slowly. "By the way, did your clerk have any of the wine?"

"Certainly not," the general declared. "Not a drop. He remained in the office while the judge and myself, with Mr. Western, went to lunch."

"Did you three have anything which the clerk also had?"

"Yes; cigars," Purvis answered. "I had a new box of cigars which I opened after lunch, and I treated the clerk to one."

"And you all fell asleep while smoking your cigars?"

The others nodded assent.

"What is where the fine work comes in," Joe Phenix declared.

"Despite of all our care, despite of all our shrewd calculations, the unknown avenger who killed Doffheimer has been too smart for us."

"How so?" the general inquired.

"The cigars were drugged, and when you smoked them the drugs entered into your system and made you fall asleep."

The general was astounded and stared at the detective as though he thought the man was out of his mind.

"My dear fellow, isn't this idea of yours a little far-fetched?" he asked.

"I am aware that it is not a difficult matter to drug a man by putting a dose in his liquor, but to overcome his senses through the agency of a drugged cigar is something so altogether out of the common that I am decidedly incredulous in regard to it."

"Well, I must admit that though I have heard of the trick being worked in that way, I never knew of its being done of my own knowledge," Joe Phenix replied.

"But there is not the slightest doubt that it can be done, and has been done," he continued.

"It takes a first-class man to doctor the cigars, of course."

"Where did you get them?" the detective asked, abruptly.

"From Lopez on Broadway," the general answered. "He is a first-class man, you know, and keeps as good a cigar-store as there is in the city. I get a special brand of cigars, a small box with only a dozen cigars in it, and these cigars that we smoked came from a fresh box which I ordered to be sent to my office when I passed the cigar-store this morning. The box came while we were at lunch and I had to open it in order to get the cigars out—proof positive that the cigars could not have been tampered with."

"I am not so sure about that as you appear to be, general," the detective answered in his quiet way.

"Suppose you show me the box?" he added, and there was a dry, peculiar smile upon his face as he spoke.

"Certainly! it is here on my desk!" and the general got up to look for it, but to his surprise it was not where he expected to find it.

"Really, now, this is most remarkable!" he exclaimed, as he gazed around in perplexity. "I was quite sure I put the box on the desk, but it has disappeared."

"It does not surprise me in the least," Joe Phenix observed. "I did not think you would find the box when I asked you for it."

"Ah, yes, there were a number of strangers in the room, and in the confusion some rascal evidently stole it," the general remarked.

"Oh, no, the rascal who stole the cigars was the man who doctored them," the veteran detective declared. "By taking away the box he put a stop to any examination of the cigars."

"Really, now, Mr. Phenix, you are not surely in earnest!" the general exclaimed, very much perplexed.

"Yes, I never was more in earnest in my life!" the detective replied.

"Both of you dropped off to sleep while smoking?" Joe Phenix asked.

"Yes, that is correct," the general answered.

"And the judge was smoking also?"

"Certainly!"

"How much had you smoked of your cigar, do you suppose, before sleep overcame you?"

Purvis looked surprised, for the question seemed a rather trifling one to him.

"Well, really, I am a little doubtful on that point, but it is my impression that I had not got through more than half of my cigar when sleep got the best of me," the general affirmed.

"How does that strike you, Western?" Joe Phenix asked.

"About correct, I think, for I am pretty certain that I had about half my cigar left when I laid my head down on the desk," the lieutenant replied.

"There ought to be three half-consumed cigars, then," the veteran detective said, in his quiet way.

"Four, really," he continued, "if the clerk's cigar is counted, but unless I am greatly mistaken you will not be able to find even a fragment of the cigars."

"Great heavens! is that possible?" the general exclaimed, now considerably excited, and then he proceeded to search for the cigars.

But it was as Joe Phenix had anticipated, not a vestige of the fragrant "weeds" could be found.

"Well, well, this is most astounding!" the general exclaimed, pausing in the center of the room, in bewilderment.

Western did not offer to aid the general in the search, for he was acute enough to guess the nature of the suspicion which his chief entertained, and was satisfied it would be only a waste of time to look for the cigars.

"The man who carried off the box of cigars also helped himself to the half-consumed ones, for he desired to make a clean sweep of it: he did not wish evidence left so an examination would reveal that the cigars had been doctored."

"You are speaking in riddles, Mr. Phenix," the general exclaimed, greatly perplexed. "And I must confess that I do not understand it at all. Why should any one take the trouble to doctor the cigars? What could any one gain by so doing?"

"An opportunity to murder the judge while all three of you were under the influence of the

drug which had been administered by the aid of the cigars."

"Great heavens! Mr. Phenix, you don't really believe that the judge was murdered!" the general exclaimed, in horror.

"Yes, I feel certain of it," the veteran detective replied.

"Examine the facts in the case carefully," Joe Phenix continued.

"Was not the slumber into which you fell an unnatural one?"

"Yes, yes, most certainly!" the general declared. "I do not ever remember to have slept in that way before."

"You were drugged, of course, and the cigars did the business," the detective argued. "Was not your clerk affected in the same way? Didn't the man who came in—the one who discovered the body of the judge—find the clerk sound asleep, with his head on his desk, and you two in this room also in the same condition?"

"That is certainly the truth," the general admitted.

"Why should the judge commit suicide?" Joe Phenix asked, abruptly. "There was no reason for it. Everything was going well with him, and he had no reason to be dissatisfied with life."

This mysterious unknown, with his threatening letters, was all that he had to bother him, and as the guard which protected him had apparently frightened the avenger so that he dared not make a move, it does not seem reasonable that the judge should take his own life a man driven to desperation."

"Your argument is sound," the general remarked. "There wasn't any reason why the judge should kill himself, and as from my long and intimate association with him I am well-acquainted with his idea I know that he had a strange horror of death: never went to a funeral if he could possibly avoid it, and never liked to converse upon the subject. In short, he acted like a man who would be glad to live forever, if such a thing was possible."

"About the last man in the world to be willing to take the long leap into the dark until he was compelled so to do," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Exactly! And if he did really commit suicide I can only account for it by supposing that he was seized with a sudden attack of insanity, which for the time being rendered him unconscious of what he was doing," the general observed.

"The judge did not commit suicide!" Joe Phenix declared, positively.

"He was murdered by the same man who killed Doffheimer, and it is my impression that he is the most dangerous criminal that I have attempted to catch," the detective continued.

"The idea of the drugged cigars is a wonderful one," he added. "And the strangest thing about the affair is the fact that the clerk got hold of one of the cigars and so also went to sleep."

No matter how cunning, or careful the man was he could not have calculated in advance that such a thing would happen, nor could he arrange the affair so as to insure that the clerk should get one of the cigars."

"That is very true," the general affirmed.

"It was an accident, which aided him to carry out his plans," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Doubtless he expected when he came to the office to find the clerk at his desk, and he timed his visit so as to allow ample opportunity for the drugged cigars to get in their work, and it is probable that he had some ingenious scheme to get the clerk out of the way, so he could have a clear field to execute his vengeance."

"Ah, yes, of course, for he couldn't do anything as long as the clerk was around," the general remarked.

"But, my dear Mr. Phenix, while I have the highest confidence in your detective skill, and I fully recognize that you are a man of eminent ability, yet it is very difficult for me to bring myself to believe that you can be correct in regard to this affair," Purvis continued.

"You see, my dear sir, for a man to conceive and carry out such a monstrous scheme as this which you have described seems to me to belong entirely to the realms of romance, and I can hardly believe that it can be possible."

"I received this letter just before I came to your office, and that is why I came," Joe Phenix said, handing to the general the mysterious epistle which he had received.

"Aha! from the mysterious unknown, eh?" the general exclaimed, recognizing it at once.

"One more, and one less," and Purvis gave a snort of indignation.

"Yes, yes, you are quite right!" he continued, full of excitement. "The miserable scoundrel! In this he clearly foreshadows the murder. One more, means that he intends to kill another one of us; and one less, that after the deed is done, there will be a man missing from our councils."

"The atrocious scoundrel!" and the general, jumping to his feet, paced up and down the room in a great state of excitement.

"Phenix, you are right for a thousand dollars!" he declared, abruptly halting in front of the veteran detective.

"This man must be hunted down, no matter what it costs!" the general exclaimed, his portly form trembling with anger.

"Oh, yes, there is not the shadow of a doubt but what you are right," Purvis continued.

"The judge has been barbarously assassinated, and the vile scoundrel was cunning enough to arrange the business so that it looked as though the unfortunate man had committed suicide."

"But he had to write the letter to me so that I would understand that he was the man who did the work," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Oh, yes, I understand just what the fellow was up to!" the general exclaimed. "He conjectured that you would reveal the truth to me. His vengeance would lose its sweetness if he could not make me understand that it was his hand which struck the blow."

"And no doubt he is even now chuckling with delight, in thinking that this second deadly stroke has filled my soul with terror, but he shall find that I am made of the stuff of which of which warriors are formed."

"I will have him hunted down, no matter if it costs me every cent I am worth in the world!"

"It is really a battle to the death, general; there isn't any mistake about that," Joe Phenix remarked in his calm, deliberate way.

"Oh, I understand it, and I am ready to fight to the last gasp!" the general declared.

"There is no doubt that the man is one who is not only bold to recklessness, but possesses a vast amount of cunning," the veteran detective remarked.

"In fine, a man of brains, and unless he makes some mistake, so as to expose himself, it will not be an easy matter to trap him," and Joe Phenix spoke in a serious, thoughtful way which plainly showed he appreciated the deep gravity of the position.

"But he can be trapped, Phenix, my dear fellow!" the general exclaimed in a tone which plainly betrayed that the wish was father to the thought.

"It does not seem to me as if there ought to be any doubt in regard to that, you know," the general continued.

"No doubt that he is a smart rogue, but you, my dear Mr. Phenix, have laid many an able scoundrel by the heels in your time, and it is not possible that this rascal will be able to keep out of your clutches, no matter how smart he may be."

The general was a plucky man, nothing of the coward about him, quite a contradiction to the judge who at heart was a craven, but this mysterious affair had rendered him decidedly nervous, and no wonder, for it is not pleasant for a man to comprehend that a foe is hovering in the darkness of the background eager to strike a blow at his life.

"Well, I think the chances are decidedly in favor of my being able to trap him in the long run," the detective replied.

"And you will immediately go to work on the case?" the general asked, anxiously.

"Oh, yes, you can depend upon it that I shall not lose any time!" Joe Phenix declared.

"Though, really, when the affair is carefully considered it seems to me that it is no easy matter to find an opportunity to go to work," Purvis remarked in a reflective way.

"The fellow is a sort of a will-of-the-wisp, a 'lively flea' rascal; when you go to put your finger on him you will find that he isn't there," the general added.

"It will be a difficult job, of course, to get at a man of this kind who keeps so persistently in the background," Joe Phenix observed. "But there is a chance that I can get on his track through this cigar business."

"Ah, yes, I forgot about that!" the general exclaimed.

"The cigars were undoubtedly all right when you purchased them," the veteran detective remarked in a meditative way.

"Oh, yes! and it was not possible for any one in Lopez's store to be certain that I would come in and buy a box of cigars of that particular brand, for I am not a very regular customer, as there are a couple of stores up town where I also buy, and then I do not always smoke the same kind of cigars."

"There isn't a doubt in my mind that the cigars were all right when you purchased them," the detective declared.

"After you bought the box you had it put aside with orders to deliver it here at your office by lunch time?"

"Yes, that is correct," Purvis replied. "I told them to be sure to get it here by one o'clock."

"And when you came back from lunch the cigars were here?" Joe Phenix questioned.

"Yes."

"Received by your clerk?"

"Yes."

"Did he say anything as to who brought the box?"

"No, but it was Lopez's boy, I presume," the general replied. "I have had cigars sent from there half-a-dozen times and one particular boy always brought them."

"How old a boy?"

"A youngster, fourteen or fifteen, not older."

"It would not be a difficult matter for an expert rogue to get at the boy while the cigars

were in transit," Joe Phenix observed reflectively.

"No, it would not be; boys when sent on such errands are only too glad of an opportunity to loiter on the way, and the lad might have been decoyed into some place, persuaded to put down the cigars, and his attention then occupied while the cigars were being operated upon."

And then a sudden idea came to the general.

"But I say, my dear Mr. Phenix, wouldn't this sort of thing take some time?" he exclaimed. "Of course, I do not pretend to be an expert or to know much of anything about such matters, but it seems to me that it would not have been possible for any one to doctor the cigars in a limited amount of time. The boy would hardly have dared to loiter over a half-an-hour or so, and it is not possible that the work could have been done in that short space of time."

"How does it strike you, Mr. Western?" the general asked, abruptly.

"It does seem rather improbable," the lieutenant replied.

"I shall have to consult some expert who is posted in regard to such matters," Joe Phenix remarked.

"That the cigars could have been drugged I have no doubt," the veteran detective continued, in a reflective way. "But I do not know how the operation is performed, and I feel pretty sure that the process requires time."

"By the way, suppose you call your clerk in and ascertain who brought the cigars, and as in a matter of this sort it is always best to keep everything as quiet as possible, you can pretend that you did not pay for the cigars, and you are inquiring for the purpose of ascertaining whether the boy brought a bill or not," Joe Phenix added, abruptly.

"Ah, yes, I understand," the general remarked, with a wise look.

Then he touched the call-bell on the table, and when the clerk made his appearance, asked:

"Did the bill come with the box of cigars, Jules?"

"No, sir."

"Who brought them?"

"The same boy who usually brings them."

"And he didn't say anything about the pay?"

"No, sir. He merely handed me the box and started off, as if he was in a hurry."

"He probably neglected to bring the bill," the general observed in a careless way. "Well, it does not make any particular difference. I can stop into the store and pay as I go home."

"That is all."

The clerk withdrew.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CLERK.

"THE face of that young man is familiar to me, and yet I can't just now recall where I have seen him," Joe Phenix remarked in a reflective way after the clerk departed.

"He has been with me for the last three months, and has proved himself to be a capable fellow," the general remarked.

"What is his name?"

"Jules Lemaire."

"A Frenchman?"

"Yes."

"I fancied from his appearance that he was a foreigner, although he speaks English like a native."

"He is of French descent, but was born in this country."

"A very gentlemanly appearing young man, and from the looks of his face I should judge that he was a brainy fellow," the veteran detective observed.

"You are correct in regard to that," Purvis replied. "I never had a clerk who gave better satisfaction."

"It is strange that I cannot recall where I have seen the young man before," Joe Phenix observed, with a shake of the head, as though he was puzzled.

"Who was he with before he came to you?" the detective queried.

He was studying for a doctor in one of the medical colleges, but his health couldn't stand the close application; and then, too, for some observations which he has let fall I fancy that his funds gave out, so he was not able to keep on at the college."

"Yes, very likely; it takes considerable money for a young man to take a course in medicine in a city like New York," the veteran detective remarked.

"I fancy that the young man, too, came to a wise decision when he concluded to give up the study of medicine," the general declared. "For from what I have seen of him since he has been with me I do not believe he would have ever made a success in the doctoring line. He is a nervous, flighty fellow, quick and impulsive, and if I was a sick man he would be about the last kind of a fellow I would choose to look after my physical welfare."

"Yes, I agree with you in regard to that," Joe Phenix remarked. "He has the face of an author—a poet, or something of that sort—and as far as I can judge from his outward seeming,

he would be totally unsuited for the medical profession."

"Well, I will proceed to look into this matter at once," the detective continued, rising as he spoke.

"You can rely upon my going ahead as fast as possible, and I suppose it is hardly necessary for me to caution you to use an extra amount of carefulness in order to keep this mysterious foe from getting a chance at you."

"Oh, you can depend upon my endeavoring to look out for myself," the general responded.

"I realize that this man means business, and you can depend upon my doing all I can to beat his game."

"He is no ordinary rascal, and in order to defeat his plans extra precautions must be taken," Joe Phenix remarked, as he took his departure.

He proceeded immediately to the cigar store, and, announcing that he came on behalf of General Purvis, asked how it was that the box of cigars had not been delivered more promptly.

The proprietor explained that his errand-boy had been detained by a gentleman up-town, and so he had not been able to send the cigars as promptly as he would have liked.

Then, by dint of a skillful cross-examination, the detective ascertained that the boy could not have loitered on the way, for on comparing the time when he left the cigar store with that when he arrived at the office, it was plain that the boy had gone straight from the one place to the other.

"It is as I suspected," Joe Phenix observed, communing with himself after his usual fashion after leaving the cigar store, walking slowly down the street as he spoke.

"The cigars were not tampered with on the way from the store to the office, nor was there time for any one to doctor the cigars after they were delivered at the office before they came into the general's hands."

"There is but one way in which the trick could have been worked," the detective continued.

"Some one who was acquainted with the general's habits—who knew that he was in the habit of buying boxes of cigars of that particular brand, got a box, doctored the cigars, and then took advantage of a favorable opportunity to substitute the doctored cigars for the store ones, and now the important questions come up, when was the trick done, and who did it?"

"If I can succeed in discovering just how the game was worked, and the man who engineered the thing, I will be able to get at this mysterious assassin."

"I have my own ideas in regard to who did the trick, but I will not jump to any hasty conclusion, but go ahead in regular order."

"First to talk to the boy, and see if he gave any one a chance to get at the box while he was going from the store to the office."

The boy was not in the cigar-store when the detective made his inquiries, so he did not have an opportunity to speak to him, and then too he preferred to get the lad alone so as to be able to talk to him without any one knowing aught of the matter.

Joe Phenix took up his position in a doorway so situated as to command a view of the cigar-shop and there waited for the return of the boy.

He had not long to wait, for within ten minutes a good-looking, honest-faced lad entered the store, and in a few minutes came out with some cigar-boxes under his arm.

He came down the street, and as he came up to the detective, Joe Phenix stepped forth and accosted him.

"Are you the lad who carried the cigars to General Purvis yesterday?" the detective asked.

"Yes, sir."

"You look like a good, honest lad, and, unless I am greatly mistaken, you would tell the truth if you were questioned about anything," Joe Phenix remarked in a kind, fatherly way.

"Yes, sir, I would," the boy replied, considerably astonished at being thus addressed.

"I am a detective officer, and the general has employed me to make a little examination," Joe Phenix explained, much to the boy's surprise.

"The general thinks there is something queer about the box of cigars which you brought, and he had an idea that it was possible that a certain acquaintance of his, who is a practical joker, had managed to change the box of cigars so he received a different box from the one he bought."

"Well, if anybody did anything of that kind it must have been fixed at the store," the boy declared.

"You did not let the box go out of your possession then on your way from the store to the office?"

"No, sir, and nobody tried any game of that kind. They couldn't have worked it, anyhow!" the boy declared, stoutly. "For if anybody had tried to get hold of the box I would have mistrusted there was something wrong and I would not have had it."

"I am no flat, you know, to be fooled by any old trick of that kind!"

"The box then did not go out of your possession for a moment?"

"No, sir."

"Did you stop in anywhere?"

"Not a single place."

"Do you suppose there was any chance for anybody to get at the box in the store after the general bought it?"

"Oh, no!" the boy declared, in the most positive manner.

"I was in the store when the general bought the box, and it was immediately wrapped in paper, tied up, and put on a shelf, in the back part of the store, so no one could possibly get at it."

"Ah, I see," and the detective shook his head in a knowing way. "This idea of the general is probably a notion of his without any foundation in fact."

"Well, I am much obliged for the information, and you will confer a favor on me if you will not say anything about this little matter."

The boy said he wouldn't mention it, and then went on his way.

CHAPTER XIV.

ACTING ON A SUSPICION.

JOE PHENIX crossed the street and proceeded up-town, homeward bound.

He took the opposite side of the way because he was obliged to follow in the track of the boy, and he did not want the lad to suspect that he was following him, for he had no intention of doing anything of the kind, being satisfied that the youth had told the truth.

"My suspicion was correct, I think," the detective mused, as he proceeded on his way. "Just by instinct, as it were, I jumped at the truth without having any solid grounds to go upon."

"The clerk—this Americanized Frenchman, who has been a medical student, is the man who did the trick."

"He knew all about the particular brand of cigars which the general was in the habit of smoking, and could easily procure a box of the same."

"During the course of his medical studies he made the discovery of how a potent drug could be administered through the medium of a cigar, and so was fitted to prepare the dose; then after he got his box of doctored cigars ready, it was no trouble for him to substitute his box for the one which the general had bought, and after the murder was committed he changed the boxes again, so that if an examination had been made of the cigars, no one would have found anything wrong about them."

"Ah, yes, I do not think there is a doubt about my being on the right track, and I must take measures to see what kind of a life this young man leads when he is not in the office."

Joe Phenix had become greatly interested in this case, for he realized that it bid fair to prove to be one of the most difficult that he had ever undertaken during his long professional career, and so he made up his mind to attend to the work of shadowing the young man himself instead of employing a regular spy.

Under the circumstances of the case nothing could be done until the close of business, therefore the detective had plenty of time to prepare, and when the young man descended from the general's office, at five o'clock, Joe Phenix was on hand.

But even the nearest and dearest friend that the man-hunter possessed, would never have recognized him.

He had put on a well-worn black suit, donned a yellow wig, the hair of which was rather long and curled behind the ears in the German fashion; a soft felt hat and a pair of spectacles completed the disguise, giving the detective the appearance of a German of middle age, inclined to be studious, a good type of a dress common to the streets of the metropolis.

Right across the way from the building in which the general's office was located, the ground was being dug up for the purpose of laying the foundations of a massive building, and there was a knot of loungers, fifteen or eighteen, intently watching the workmen, so Joe Phenix was able to take up a position from which he could note all who departed from the office building without attracting attention to himself.

Some fifteen minutes after he arrived on the ground, Lemaire made his appearance on the street.

"Aha! there he comes!" the disguised detective exclaimed, in an undertone, as he caught sight of the clerk in the doorway.

"Now, then, if he is an honest man, with nothing on his mind, and no apprehension of danger, he will go straight on about his business, without looking to the right or left, but if, on the contrary, he has been engaged in any crooked work, the suspicion that a bloodhound of the law may be on his track will be sure to haunt him, so he will be almost certain to look carefully around in order to discover whether he is being shadowed or not, and it is my opinion that the odds are about one hundred to one that he will not go on his way until he has taken a good survey of the surroundings."

The surmise of the detective was correct.

As Lemaire came through the doorway he cast a quick glance up and down the street, then closely scrutinized all those who were upon the other side of the way.

Joe Phenix was at the upper end of the building, standing sideways in a group, apparently busily engaged in watching the men in the excavation, but in reality noting the clerk's movements from out of the corners of his eyes.

There was an anxious expression on Lemaire's face as he looked carefully around him which the acute detective did not fail to note.

"If that isn't the face of a man who is afraid of being caught then I am no judge!" the disguised detective murmured.

For a good five minutes the clerk remained motionless upon the steps, his eyes roaming restlessly around, then, apparently having satisfied himself that there was no one in the street who was paying any particular attention to him, he went toward Broadway, but after going a couple of hundred feet he turned abruptly around and retraced his steps, just as though he had forgotten something and was going back for it.

Joe Phenix quickly comprehended the meaning of this movement though.

"Oho! he has a suspicion that he is being shadowed and this right about-face is done for the purpose of catching the tracker," the detective remarked.

But the veteran thief-taker had not moved, for he conjectured that the clerk might be up to some game of this kind.

Now, though, after catching sight of Lemaire returning, he slowly proceeded up the street, sauntering along, with his hands in his pockets, like a man who was deep in thought and not at all in a hurry.

It was his calculation that the clerk after executing his backward movement for the purpose of catching the suspected shadow would go on again to Broadway when he had satisfied himself that no one was playing the spy upon him.

"This fellow has evidently been up to some deviltry," the disguised detective soliloquized as he went slowly onward. "Or else he would never be so anxious to discover whether he was followed or not."

"It may be possible, of course, that he is not the principal—that he is only the tool of some man who keeps in the background, for really it does not look as if this young fellow had the nerve to commit these horrible murders."

It was Joe Phenix's calculation that when the clerk came to Broadway he would take an up-town car, so he halted on the lower corner of the street as though he was waiting for a car.

At this time of the day the Broadway cars are usually uncomfortably crowded, so it did not appear at all suspicious that a man should wait for a while on a corner.

The tide of the people was setting so strongly up-town that the sidewalk was filled, and this circumstance helped to shield the disguised detective from observation.

Turning sideways, as though he was watching for an up-town car, the man-hunter was able to keep his eyes upon Lemaire.

As he had expected, the clerk after going at a rapid pace down the street for a hundred feet, turned again and came toward Broadway.

Joe Phenix could not repress the admiration which he felt at this cunning maneuver.

"Very good—very good indeed!" he muttered under his breath. "That trick was about as neatly performed as anything I have seen for some time, and if there had been a shadow on his track he most certainly would have been caught unless he was unusually expert."

Lemaire was apparently satisfied that there was no spy after him for when he reached Broadway he halted on the corner in readiness to board the car when it came along.

His intention was so evident that the disguised detective thought it was perfectly safe for him to take passage on the car when it came up.

The rear platform was so crowded that it was with difficulty the detective got on board, and Lemaire, owing to this circumstance, got on the front platform, where there was more room.

The disguised detective then crowded his way into the car so as to be able to keep his eyes upon him.

The clerk remained upon the car until it reached Tenth street when he got off and went through the cross street in an easterly direction.

Joe Phenix waited until the car had got well above the street, so that his movements would be masked from the observation of the clerk, if he should chance to look around, and then he got off.

Down Broadway he went, and as he crossed the side street, up which Lemaire had proceeded, he cast a careless glance in the direction in which the young man had gone.

The clerk had ascended the steps of a house, and was opening the door with a latch-key, as the disguised detective crossed the street.

By the side of the door, on the wall of the house, was one of the little square bits of paper which showed that it was either a boarding house or had furnished rooms to let.

"I fancy that I have tracked him to his lair,"

the man-hunter remarked. "And as soon as he goes out I will apply at the house for accommodations, and it will be very strange indeed if I do not succeed in finding out something about him."

The first point is to ascertain just what kind of a house it is, for if he only has a room there he will go out for his supper, and so give me a chance to make an examination."

Acting on this idea the bloodhound crossed the street and walked by the house.

As he had anticipated, the bill announced that furnished rooms could be had therein.

"That is lucky," Joe Phenix murmured, as he went on in a slow, leisurely way.

"Now then to select some favorable spot from which I can watch without danger of attracting the suspicions of my bird, if he should chance to see me."

Fortune seemed to be favoring the bloodhound, for a hundred feet down the street, and on the opposite side of the way, there was a vacant house, with a deep doorway.

"Aha! Just the thing!" the disguised detective exclaimed, as soon as his eyes fell on it.

He had taken the precaution to put an old magazine in his pocket, and when he seated himself in the doorway, and commenced to pore over the magazine, it would have been a cunning rascal indeed who would have suspected there was anything suspicious about the apparently harmless and inoffensive reader, so deeply interested in his book, and looking like anything but a spy on the watch.

CHAPTER XV.

PREPARING THE TRAP.

FROM where he sat Joe Phenix commanded a good view of the house which the clerk had entered, but as he was well back in the doorway it was not likely that any one coming from the house would be apt to notice him.

The veteran man-hunter was patience personified, but on this occasion he had not long to wait, for within twenty minutes Lemaire came forth and passed along the street in the direction of the Bowery.

Upon reaching the sidewalk the clerk cast a scrutinizing glance around, and from his manner it was evident that he had a fear that a watcher might be on his track.

The man in the doorway escaped his notice owing to the fact that three big and jovial Germans met and halted to shake hands exactly in front of him just as Lemaire made his examination.

The disguised detective read his magazine until Lemaire got out of sight, and then he put the monthly in his pocket, rose, crossed the street, ascended the steps of the house and rung the door-bell.

Soon a middle-aged, sharp-featured woman made her appearance.

"I am in search of furnished rooms," the disguised detective explained, in his most affable manner. "I am a journalist—a writer by profession, and I desire to secure two comfortable rooms in a quiet location for myself and nephew."

"I think I can suit you, sir," the woman replied, evidently favorably impressed by the applicant.

"If you will please to walk in I will show you the rooms," she continued. "And I feel sure that you will not be able to find a more quiet house than mine in the city."

Then as she led the way up-stairs, after closing the door behind the man-hunter, she explained that there were only three lodgers in the house now, nice, quiet gentlemen, all of them, she declared.

She ushered the visitor into a good-sized room on the second story in the rear of the house, and then stated that she had a smaller room right next door.

"This is a very comfortable room indeed," the disguised detective commented. "It would do very well for my nephew, but I do not think he would be satisfied with a much smaller room, for he is studying short-hand so as to become a reporter, and therefore spends a great deal of his time in his room practicing."

"I must admit too that I like a large apartment myself," he continued. "Although I am away from home the greater part of the time as my business keeps me constantly on the go, but when I am in the city I like to be comfortable."

"This door leads into the front room, I presume?" the man-hunter said.

"Yes, sir, but that is occupied; Mr. Lemaire has that room, a very nice young man."

This was just the information that the detective was after, and so he pretended to be struck by the name.

"Lemaire—Lemaire!" he exclaimed in a thoughtful way. "Why, it seems to me that I used to know a young man by that name, he was from Boston and connected with one of the big Sixth avenue dry goods houses."

"I don't really know where this gentleman comes from for I never heard him say, but he is not in the dry-goods business now."

"Ah, what line does he follow?"

"He is a clerk down-town with some brokers who have something to do with mines, I believe. He told me the name of the firm when he first took a room here, but I have forgotten about it now."

"These young Wall street men are inclined to be rather wild, I believe," the disguised detective remarked with a solemn shake of the head.

"Well, I don't know much about them," the landlady replied, "for this is the only Wall street gentleman that I ever had in the house, but I must say that he is anything but wild, for a more quiet young man never had a room with me. He is rather odd, and keeps to himself, never making friends with any of the other gentlemen, but there is no harm in that, you know."

"Certainly not!" the disguised detective declared. "I am a good deal that way myself," he continued.

Then he commenced to talk about the rooms again, and finally wound up by engaging the two that the woman had shown him.

He explained that his nephew was out of town and he expected him back that night, although it was possible he would not come until morning, then took his departure.

"I am getting on pretty well," the detective mused as he walked up Broadway in search of a district messenger office.

"I have secured quarters in the house with my bird, and the next move in the game is to put a spy there with the idea of his making the acquaintance of this Franco-American."

"Mignon ought to be able to do the trick, if any one can," he continued. "And it is about time too that I got a report from her in regard to how matters go on in the Doffheimer household."

"From the fact that she has not given me any report, I judge that she has not made any discoveries that amount to anything."

Joe Phenix's meditations at this point were interrupted by his arrival at a district messenger station.

Here he sent a carefully worded message to Mignon, expressing his desire to meet her at the house as he had an important business matter to discuss.

To the communication he merely signed the initial, J., for he knew she would understand from whom the message came after she read it.

The veteran detective was particular to word the communication in such a way that if by any chance it should fall into the hands of a stranger it would appear to be merely a common-place business message.

The man-hunter was always on the lookout to provide against contingencies of this kind, for caution had become a second nature to him.

After dispatching the message, Joe Phenix proceeded to his house on the east side of the metropolis.

As the reader who has followed the fortunes of the lion-hearted, eagle-eyed detective as depicted in the novels to which his name is attached, will undoubtedly remember, the veteran detective occupied two residences.

One was a modest two-story brick on a cross street leading from Third avenue, and the other a so-called lower flat on a mean-looking tenement-house on the next avenue.

The back of the two houses came together, and by means of a secret door the detective was able to pass from one to the other.

As Joe Phenix entered his own house, and then, after assuming one of his wonderful disguises, he passed out through the tenement-house, and as there were as many people living in the huge barracks as would go to make up the population of a good-sized country village, and a most motley collection they were, too, no one paid any attention to who came in or went out.

So, no matter how strange was the disguise which the detective assumed, no one paid any attention to his arrival or departure, but if he had used the door of his own house the attention of the neighbors would have certainly been attracted to the many queer-looking men arriving and departing, and considerable talk would surely have ensued.

This was exactly what Joe Phenix wished to guard against, for he believed that the detective who was careful to keep in the background, and who succeeded in surrounding himself with an atmosphere of mystery, would be able to do far better work than the man who allowed the world at large to see how he did his feats.

Joe Phenix entered the front room of the tenement and arranged the blinds so he could see all who entered the house without being seen himself; then he sat down to wait for the arrival of the actress detective.

He had directed her in the note to come to the house on the avenue, and he had no fear in regard to her understanding what he meant.

Mignon was prompt, as he had expected, for before a half an hour had elapsed she entered the door of the tenement-house.

By this time the shades of night were beginning to fall, so after the girl entered the room Joe Phenix drew down the curtains and lighted a lamp.

Mignon had put on a plain, dark suit, and adjusted a veil over her little, common walking

hat, so as not to be likely to attract any attention.

"You are prompt," the veteran detective remarked, after placing a chair for the girl and then resuming his own seat.

"I was just going out with the idea of hunting you up when your messenger arrived," the girl replied.

"The thought came to me that it was about time I heard something from you."

"And yet, really, I haven't anything to report," Mignon declared.

"If there was anything to discover you ought to have been able to get on the track by this time."

"That is true enough, and you may rest assured that I have kept my eyes open, but I have not been able to make any discoveries, and it is my opinion that there are not any to make."

"Nothing crooked about either the brother or sister, eh?"

"No, I think not, unless they are far deeper than I give them any credit for being."

"I do not think it is likely that they could deceive so keen an observer as yourself," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Well, I do not really believe that they could," Mignon replied, after a moment's reflection.

"I do not want to seem egotistical, you know," she continued, "but I flatter myself that I am a pretty good judge of human nature, and I think, even though I have only been acquainted with this young man and woman for a short time, that I understand their characters as well as though I had known them for years."

"I know that your judgment is good, and I do not doubt that you have come to a correct opinion in regard to the pair, although you have not been long about it," Joe Phenix observed.

"I will commence with the young man first," Mignon began.

"He is a good-natured fellow, of medium abilities, and decidedly troubled by an attack of the big head, for he thinks he is wonderfully shrewd and smart, when in reality he is only close and mean, and although he believes himself to be a financier of good ability, yet there is not much danger of this delusion ever leading him to lose much money, for he is too cautious to make any heavy investments, although he is quite satisfied that if he choose to go into the money market he could manage matters so as to make the world open its eyes in wonder."

"There are a great many people in the world who have a notion of that kind," the veteran detective observed. "And they get along all right just as long as they do not attempt to try their skill, but when they do usually they make a sad blunder."

"I do not think he is ever likely to make a mistake of that kind, for he is too much afraid of losing his money to ever risk it," Mignon observed.

"He has one peculiar notion which, more than anything, possibly, shows that he hasn't got as much sense as he might have, and that is, the young fellow fancies himself deeply in love with me, and he would make me Mrs. Doffheimer tomorrow if I would only consent."

Joe Phenix laughed and shook his head.

"Really, you are doing yourself an injustice when you make a statement of that kind," he declared. "Knowing you as well as I do I should regard it as a proof that he was a young man possessed of remarkable good sense."

"Ah, yes, that is all right, but he does not know as you do," the girl retorted.

"All he knows about me is that I was a serio-comic singer in the variety theater in Tin Cup, and that his precious father took a fancy to me, and although I told him in good plain English that I did not care anything about him, and felt sure that I never would, yet he continued to bother me with his attentions until I got out of his reach by leaving the mining-camp."

"And the son has taken it into his head to follow in his father's footsteps?"

"Yes, but he isn't half as bad as the old man, for he lacks his father's dogged determination," the actress-detective replied.

"He does not look like a man who possessed a strong will."

"Oh, no, he is inclined to be decidedly weak."

"Not the man to commit or contrive a daring and desperate deed like the murder of Barnabas Doffheimer?"

"Oh, no," Mignon exclaimed, decidedly, "I am satisfied that he did not have any hand in that affair."

"Doffheimer's children are innocent, for the sister is a counterpart of the brother, a weak, dowdy kind of a girl whose chief concern is to dress as well as possible upon the smallest amount of money," the actress-detective continued.

"She wants to be a belle, you understand, and catch some sprig of the 400 for a husband; some fellow who comes of an extra good family and possesses plenty of money besides."

"She has undertaken a rather difficult task, I should fancy."

"Oh, yes, for although she has plenty of money she is not an attractive girl, I do not doubt though that there are plenty of men of good

birth in the city who might be inclined to put up with a homely girl if she had plenty of cash, yet no rich young fellow would be apt to do it, for a man who has plenty of money can always find lots of handsome girls who will be glad to share his fortunes."

"Then it is your opinion that neither one of the children knew aught of the murder, although the death-blow of the assassin made them rich?" Joe Phenix asked, thoughtfully.

"Yes, I am glad for the credit of the human race to be able to say that such is my opinion."

"I, too, am glad to hear it, and I had a thought right at the beginning that you would not be able to discover anything, still, as it is always my rule not to neglect any points, I thought it wise to allow you to go ahead."

"It seems to me that it was prudent," Mignon observed in a thoughtful way.

"But I think I have managed to get a clue which will enable me to get at this mysterious murderer, although he has managed the affair with wonderful skill."

And then the veteran detective related all the particulars of the judge's death.

The actress-detective listened with the utmost interest.

"I heard the newsboys crying the extras with a full account of the suicide of a Wall street man, as I came along, but I did not stop to examine into the matter," she said.

"It was not a suicide, but another blow from the hand of the mysterious murderer," the man-hunter declared.

Then he read the note which he had received to Mignon.

"Ah, yes, no doubt about it!" she exclaimed.

"The death of the judge was the work of the assassin, and no suicide!"

Joe Phenix then related all that occurred after the judge's death was discovered, giving the full particulars of his actions up to the time of his sending the message requesting Mignon to meet him.

The actress-detective listened with the greatest attention, and her eyes sparkled when the veteran man-hunter described how he had secured rooms for himself and his "nephew" in the house where the clerk, Lemaire, had his apartment.

"It is a capital game which you have planned!" Mignon exclaimed. "And am I to play the part of the nephew?"

"Yes, that is the role assigned to you."

"Very well, I will gladly undertake it. When shall I begin—to-night?"

"Can you get ready as soon as that?"

"Oh, yes; an hour will be ample time for me to prepare," the actress-detective replied. "All I will have to do is to go home and pack a valise, then take a cab and return here where I can assume my disguise."

"And then we can take another cab and go to the house in company," the man-hunter suggested. "I will prepare a valise also, for it will not look right for us to go to the house without baggage."

"Oh, no, that wouldn't do at all. It would be sure to excite suspicion," the girl remarked.

"I explained to the landlady that I was a journalist, and that my duties took me away from home a great deal. My idea was to prepare the ground so that your being there alone would not excite any comment, for the game is for you to make the acquaintance of this young man and get on intimate terms with him."

"Yes, I understand."

"You are alone in the house—a stranger in the city, and it is the most natural thing in the world for you to seek to make the acquaintance of a young fellow of about the same age as yourself."

"I will do my best to get on the right side of him!" the actress-detective declared.

"In my opinion you will find the task to be one of extreme difficulty," Joe Phenix remarked.

"And you must play your part with the utmost carefulness, for this man is no ordinary rascal, and it will require all our skill to trap him."

"I will do my best!" Mignon responded.

"And you can depend upon my using the utmost caution."

"The moment that the suspicion came to me that the cigars were drugged I got the idea the clerk was the man who did the trick," the veteran detective explained. "I was very careful though not to allow the general to see that I had any misgivings in regard to Lemaire, and as I wanted information in regard to him I pretended to think I had met him before, and expressed my wonder that I was not able to recall the circumstances, so I got all the particulars in regard to the man, without the general being aware that I was questioning him for a definite purpose."

"It was wise in you not to allow the general to think that you suspected the man, for if he had got an inkling of the truth he would have been almost certain to betray the fact to Lemaire," the girl observed, thoughtfully.

"Exactly! That was just what I was afraid might happen," the veteran detective replied.

"And when a man sets out to play a game of

this kind with a rascal who is unusually cunning and skillful, he cannot afford to give a single point away."

"Certainly not!" Mignon asserted. "And if this man once got the notion into his head that he was suspected, the chances are great that he would cover up his tracks so he could not be caught."

"That is my surmise, and for that reason I am taking extra pains to keep in the background."

"In the first place, the fellow knows that I am engaged on the case," Joe Phenix continued. "That is proved by his sending me the communication which brought me to the scene of the judge's death, but it is not possible for him to suspect that I have a notion that he had aught to do with the matter."

"No, not unless he is gifted with the foresight of a prophet!" the girl declared.

"That is not likely," Joe Phenix observed, dryly. "Prophets who can look into the future are scarce. Now, then, let us get at the motives which have actuated this man—we must speculate in regard to that, so as to get some idea as to how to approach him."

"At the first glance it does not appear as if the man had any motive at all," the girl remarked in a thoughtful way. "But he had, of course, unless he is a moral monster, who kills merely for the pleasure of killing."

"In that case he would be apt to strike at random, while this man confines his attentions to this one particular firm," the veteran detective argued.

"Oh, no, this man is no murderous lunatic who kills merely because he wishes to kill. On the contrary, he proceeds on certain well-defined lines. He bears a deadly hatred to the three men who compose the Colorado Syndicate, and he does not attack them without reason."

"I cross-examined the general, and the judge, after Doffheimer's death, in order to learn if any of their transactions in the West were of such a nature as to put an avenger on their track."

"I heard of one while I was in Colorado!" Mignon exclaimed. "It was the talk of the camp at the time, and the men there—the most of them, who were not interested in the works controlled by the syndicate—regarded the proceeding as a high-handed outrage."

"Do you refer to the Blue Eagle affair?" Joe Phenix asked.

"Yes, by some hocus-pocus the syndicate got a legal claim to the mine, and as the man who was in possession refused to get out, the sheriff was called upon to eject him."

"Yes, I am acquainted with all the particulars of the affair; the man was named Victor Grandtete, he was a Frenchman, and in attempting to resist the officers was killed."

"The Tin Cup men said that he was a crack-brained fellow, and they had always considered him to be a little 'off,' a statement which was clearly proven to be correct by his attempt to resist the officers, but for all that it was a fearful outrage for the syndicate to kill him."

"They have been compelled to atone for the deed," the man-hunter remarked. "That is, if this mysterious murderer is striking at them on account of that affair, and I firmly believe that he is. One life they sacrificed, and the avenger has taken two."

"Yes, and unless the general takes unusual good care of himself he will be added to the score."

"Undoubtedly!" the veteran detective asserted. "If we do not succeed in trapping our man he will be sure to strike a deadly blow at the general sooner or later."

"Now then, I propose to go ahead on the theory that this Lemaire, who is also a Frenchman, bear in mind, is some relative of the Grandtete who was killed in Colorado, and it is on account of that killing that he is taking upon himself the role of an avenger."

"Yes, I understand."

"Now, after you make the acquaintance of the clerk, you must pretend that you have a grievance, and if you could only summon up sufficient courage, you would revenge yourself by indulging in a little blood-letting."

Mignon nodded assent.

"I am your uncle, and have always had charge of you since you were an infant, but you have a suspicion that your father when he died left a large amount of money, which I have taken, robbing you of your inheritance, but I have managed the matter so shrewdly that you cannot prove it in a law court, and therefore are obliged to submit to the wrong."

"But I would be delighted to get a whack at you, all the same," the girl remarked, with a smile.

"Yes, that is the story to tell, and then you must pretend that you are a socialist, a believer in the rights of man, a hater of capitalists and constituted authorities generally."

"I comprehend. A regenerator of society—a man who is anxious to tear down in order to get a chance to build up."

"Exactly! And then you must tell him the story of your life, how I took you out to Colorado some four years ago and put you in a store in Tin Cup with a man who abused and ill-treated you generally."

"That is to bring me to the scene of the original tragedy?"

"Yes; and in the course of the conversation you can relate all the particulars of the Blue Eagle struggle, and then concoct some yarns about the syndicate being mixed up in similar affairs in other towns, and hint darkly that you think you could give the police a clew which would be apt to put them on the trail of the assassin, as you are satisfied that Doffheimer was killed by some man whom he had ruined in Colorado."

"I understand the game!" Mignon exclaimed. "The man must be extra shrewd if, during this recital, he does not let fall some unguarded expressions which will give me an idea as to whether he had a hand in the tragedy or not."

"If he is a man of uncommon discernment he may suspect that you are a spy and are trying to lay a trap for him," Joe Phenix observed slowly, and in a meditative way.

"Do you think there is any danger of his suspecting the truth?" Mignon asked, evidently doubtful.

"Yes; if he is the brainy fellow that I take him to be he may suspect that you are not what you pretend to be. Sometimes these things come to a man by instinct, just as I had a suspicion from the beginning that he knew something about the murder, although I did not have a particle of proof to go upon."

"I understand, for I, too, have jumped to a conclusion in that way without having any grounds to support my surmise."

"If he does get the suspicion that you are a spy, whose mission it is to betray him to justice, then you must look out for yourself."

The girl laughed in a confident way, and it was plain that she was not at all afraid.

"He is a desperate man, you know, and would not shrink from taking your life if he fancied that by so doing he could secure his own safety," Joe Phenix warned.

"I am not alarmed, for if he should attempt to try any game of that kind, I think I would be pretty certain to catch him red-handed in the net and then it would be all up with my gentleman."

"Do not be too confident, and do not neglect any precautions."

"Trust me to look out for myself, and you can depend upon my not giving a point away."

"Well, that is all," the veteran detective remarked.

"I will be off then, and in an hour you may expect me back," Mignon observed as she took her departure.

CHAPTER XVI.

PLAYING SPY.

A WEEK has gone by since the night when Joe Phenix and his best Special took up their quarters in the furnished-room house.

On the next day the veteran detective took his departure, taking pains to explain to the landlady that he was going out of town on a business trip and expected to be gone for a couple of weeks, and, possibly, longer.

For the first two days Mignon amused herself by pretending to study the instruction books which Joe Phenix had provided, and conversing with the landlady whenever she encountered that lady.

Then too she paid particular attention to Lemaire's comings and goings, being anxious to learn all she could in regard to his habits.

The clerk was as steady as clock-work.

He left the house each morning at half-past eight and returned at half-past five in the afternoon; then he went out for his supper, came back in about half an hour, and remained in his room until the next morning.

As soon as she took possession of the apartment the actress-detective set to work to see how she could best play the spy upon the clerk.

The reader understands, of course, that Mignon had put on male attire, and now appeared to be a young man of twenty or thereabouts, and she carried herself so well that the most acute observer would never have suspected that she was anything different from what she appeared to be.

Hector Calvert the actress-detective called herself, and Joe Phenix masqueraded as Richard Calvert, or Uncle Dick, as the supposed nephew termed him.

By means of the door which led from Mignon's room into Lemaire's she hoped to be able to keep a pretty close watch upon the clerk, possibly to gain an entrance to the apartment when he was out, but it did not take her long to discover that it was not going to be an easy matter to get admittance in that way, for there was a stout bolt on the door on Lemaire's side, and the landlady was careful to always keep the door locked, and in her gossiping way she explained that the clerk was very particular about not keeping his room door open, for he was studying chemistry, and as he left his things lying carelessly about, he was afraid that if the door was left open some one might disturb them.

Mignon did not dare to try any tricks with the door, for she was afraid that Lemaire would discover it if she attempted to tamper either with

the bolt or the lock, and she knew how important it was not to rouse his suspicions.

Even the usually convenient keyhole could not be used, for Lemaire had his washstand placed against the door so as to obstruct the view.

"This was arranged on purpose," Mignon murmured as soon as she made this discovery. "He is taking precautions, so that no one shall play the spy upon him."

"I think it is very probable that Phenix has not made any mistake in thinking the man to be crooked."

"If he were all right, he would not care whether anybody gained access to his room or not."

On the third day Mignon managed to go out in the morning at the same time that Lemaire took his departure and improved the opportunity to speak to him.

The clerk answered civilly enough, and the two walked to the corner, then took a Broadway car together.

As it was crowded as usual the two stood on the back platform, and Hector—to give the actress-detective the name by which she was known—in a country-boy-like burst of confidence, confided to Lemaire that his uncle had brought him to New York with the idea of making a reporter out of him, but as he did not admire the life, and hated the study of stenography, he had made up his mind to go down-town and try for a situation in a store or office.

"You will find that it will be hard work to get a place," Lemaire remarked. "New York is overcrowded, and there are generally fifty applicants for every one vacancy."

The youth declared himself to be full of hope, boy-like, and said he had made a list of places, where young men were wanted, from the morning newspaper and was going to try his luck.

The other wished him success, but remarked that he would be extremely lucky to get a chance.

Then the pair conversed upon various matters until the City Hall was reached, where the disguised detective got off, apparently to pursue his quest.

That afternoon Hector contrived to time his arrival at the house so as to meet Lemaire at the door.

"No luck!" he exclaimed, before the clerk could question him.

"Well, I was afraid that you would be disappointed," the other observed.

"I shall try it on again to-morrow though!" Hector declared. "I am not the kind of fellow who gets discouraged because he does not succeed the first time."

"Well, that is right," the clerk responded. "If you keep on you may succeed in time, but as I told you this morning, it is hard work for a fellow to get an opening in New York, particularly if he is a stranger in the city."

"Yes, I found out to-day that about all the men preferred a fellow who had worked in New York, and could bring city recommendations."

"Undoubtedly, and that is just what I told you; if you remember," Lemaire remarked as the two ascended the steps together.

"Yes, I know it," Hector replied. "Well, there is one consolation: I am not really suffering for a place, and am able to take my time about getting one."

Lemaire remarked that this was fortunate, and then the two passed into the house together.

This was the beginning of the acquaintance, and from this time the pair became quite intimate.

The clerk always seemed glad to meet the young man, and took pains to invite him to come into his room to pass the evening, so the disguised detective had a fine opportunity to carry out his scheme.

Lemaire listened with apparent interest to Hector's story, but was inclined to believe he was mistaken in thinking his uncle had wronged him; in fact he talked in such a christian-like way that Hector came to the opinion that either there had been a mistake made in thinking the man to be a thorough-paced rascal, or else he was a perfect master of the art of deception.

Hector was in no hurry to bring up the Doffheimer case, and it was not until the sixth night of his sojourn in the house that he mentioned it.

He was looking over the evening newspaper which Lemaire had brought with him from down town, and it contained a reference to the mysterious tragedy, which Hector read aloud.

"I knew this Doffheimer in Colorado," the youth remarked.

"Is that so?" the other asked, interested.

"Oh, yes, I was clerking in a store in Tin Cup when he was one of the big guns of the place, and a mighty arrogant, lordly kind of man he was too," Hector asserted.

"I do not wonder that some one killed him, and the only surprise to me is that he was not killed before," he continued. "For he was always in hot water out there—always quarreling with somebody or other about mining properties, and while I was out West I know of my own knowledge of his having been instrumental in causing the death of three or four men."

"You astonish me!" the clerk declared.

"I don't mean to say, you know, that he killed the men himself, or that he was mixed up in the

fight when the men were killed; oh, no, he was too cunning for that."

"You see, the way he arranged the matter was to get the lawyers to fix things so that the other fellows were enmeshed out of the mines, and then he sent the sheriff, with a gang, to take possession, and when the original owners resisted, the gang cleaned them out."

"Ah, yes, I see," Lemaire remarked in a thoughtful way.

"He was a big rascal and deserved to be killed, and there are a lot more of the rich fellows, with their millions, which they have really stolen just as much as though they had knocked their victims down and taken the money out of their pockets, who ought to travel the same road!"

The other laughed at the enthusiasm of the youth.

"Come, come now, aren't you going a little too far?" he asked.

"No, I don't think so, and if you knew as much about this Doffheimer as I do you would agree with me that he was a man who had done enough to warrant his being killed a dozen times over!" Hector asserted, heatedly.

"I was acquainted with Doffheimer," the clerk remarked in a quiet way.

"Why, were you ever in Colorado?" the youth asked in astonishment.

"Oh, no, but I knew Doffheimer here in New York."

"Ah, yes, I see."

"He was my employer."

Hector assumed a look of intense surprise.

"His firm was known as the Colorado Syndicate and I have been a clerk in their office for quite a time."

"Oh, well, I didn't know that, of course, and I am sorry that I spoke so harshly about the man, but really I was giving you my honest opinion."

"That is all right!" the other declared.

"You are entitled to your opinion, of course, but though Doffheimer may have been a very bad man out in Colorado he certainly was not here in New York, for I never got along any better with any one in my life, and I never knew of his having any trouble."

"I do not doubt that that is correct," Hector observed.

"Of course it stands to reason that he wouldn't dare to try any of the games in the East here that he worked in the West for the people wouldn't stand it."

"He couldn't get together a gang here and ride over men rough-shod as he did in Colorado!" Hector asserted.

"I know nothing about his western experience but here he certainly did not have any trouble."

"Out there he was always in a fight, just as I told you, and I reckon too, as they say in Colorado, I could give the detectives a hint which would be apt to put them on the right scent so they could find the man who killed Doffheimer if I felt inclined to do it, which I don't," Hector declared in a mysterious way.

"You surprise me!" Lemaire responded.

"No, I wouldn't interfere!" the youth exclaimed. "For to my thinking the man who did the job had a good reason for wanting to get square with Doffheimer, and I would scorn to give him away!"

"It was an awful crime though," the clerk responded in a reflective way.

"Yes, but what Doffheimer did was just as bad!" Hector asserted.

"It does not seem to be possible," Lemaire observed, slowly.

"Wait until you hear the story and then you may change your mind," Hector replied.

"Yes, that is true."

"Did you ever hear of the Blue Eagle tragedy?"

"Never," responded Lemaire, looking the questioner full in the eye, and without the slightest evidence visible in his face that he was not speaking the truth.

Although the youth spoke carelessly, yet all his senses were on the alert to catch some sign to denote that the clerk was not as innocent and unconcerned about the matter as he appeared to be, but Lemaire stood the test so well that in his secret heart the disguised detective set the clerk down as possessing the most magnificent nerve of any man that he had ever encountered.

"Well, it is my belief that the Blue Eagle business is at the bottom of this mystery," Hector declared.

And then he related the story of the fight for the mine.

"It was a very unfortunate affair," the clerk declared, with a grave shake of the head.

"The death of that man lies at Doffheimer's door, and it was no wonder that he was called upon to atone for the crime with his own life."

"Yes, but really I do not see that there is a connection between the two," Lemaire remarked, reflectively.

"Didn't you say that this unfortunate man who was killed in the Blue Eagle affair was without friends or relatives to aid him in his struggle against Doffheimer?"

"He did not have any in Colorado, but I think it is probable that he possessed relatives elsewhere, and some one of them, upon learn-

ing how the man had been hounded to his death by Doffheimer, killed the mining millionaire in order to be revenged."

"Ah, yes, it seems to me there is a good deal of probability in that surmise," Lemaire observed.

"I don't think there is a doubt but that is the secret of Doffheimer's death."

"I should not be surprised," the clerk affirmed, in a tone of conviction.

"But I say, don't you think that you ought to mention this matter to the authorities, for it might put them on the track of the assassin?" Lemaire asked.

"Oh, no, I wouldn't put a straw in the way of the man making his escape, for I think that Doffheimer richly deserved all he got!" Hector declared, with an air of bravado.

"And then, too, what are these detectives good for that they talk so much about if they cannot get on the track without outside help?"

"Yes, that is true; they ought certainly to be able to learn all the particulars of such a case as this."

"That is true, and if they cannot it goes to show that they are not good for much!" Hector declared.

"One thing is certain as far as I am concerned, and that is I would not go a step out of my way to help them any."

"Well, I do not know as I can blame you," the clerk remarked in a thoughtful way. "For if the man was captured through your agency it would seem, if he was executed, that his blood was on your hands."

"I don't know as that would trouble me much, but I go on the idea that Doffheimer deserved to die, and that the man who killed him was not so much out of the way after all."

Lemaire shook his head.

"I am afraid that I am not able to agree with you in regard to that, for if Doffheimer had committed any crime he ought to have been legally tried and convicted," he argued.

"Ah, yes, but that is just where the trouble comes in—men like Doffheimer who are worth eight or ten millions of dollars are above the law," Hector responded, earnestly.

"Their great wealth makes them independent. They can afford to hire a whole army of able lawyers, can bribe judges, and buy jurors, so that even when everybody knows that they are guilty men it is sometimes very hard to punish them."

"Oh, come now! I cannot agree with you that it is as bad as that!" the clerk declared.

"You must admit that the way things are today in New York that a man with a great deal of money can commit a crime and stand a much better chance of getting off than he would have if he was poor."

"Yes, I presume so," Lemaire admitted. "Human nature is weak, prone to yield to temptation, and the lust for money is strong."

Then the clerk happened to look at his little clock and discovered that it was bedtime, so the interview came to an end.

The disguised detective retreated, unable to boast of having gained a point.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN INVITATION.

THE second week of the spy's sojourn in the house began, and although this favorite Special of Joe Phenix possessed a vast amount of patience, yet despite the fact that he had been able to get on the most familiar terms with the clerk, he could not say that he had gained the slightest bit of information, and yet the spy had studied Lemaire as the patient student studies some deep problem, the solving of which will cover him with honor.

There was something odd and peculiar about the man, there was no doubt about that, and at times he had such feminine ways that the watcher was half-inclined to believe he was not a man, but a woman in disguise.

The thought was too wild a one, though, for the spy to give it credence.

"Oh, no," the disguised detective murmured, when he fell to speculating in regard to the matter. "Possibly there may be one woman picked out of ten thousand who could play a game of this kind, but not more than that, and this clerk is a man fast enough, for all his womanish ways."

That evening, after supper, when the spy sauntered into Lemaire's room, he found the clerk preparing to go out.

"I have got a restless fit on me to-night," Lemaire announced, "and I am going for a walk up the Bowery. Will you come along?"

"Yes, I don't mind."

"I do not think I take exercise enough," the clerk observed.

"Being shut up in an office all day, bending over a desk, don't agree with me, and I think I ought to take a good long walk every evening."

"Undoubtedly it will do you good. I used to be a great walker, but since I have taken up my quarters in the city I have not done much walking."

"Are you game for a three or four miles walk

up Third avenue?" Lemaire asked, in a bantering tone.

"Oh, yes!" the youth responded, immediately. "I will give you leave to set the pace, and if I don't keep up with you I will stand treat."

"That is a bargain!" the clerk responded.

"Come on, then!"

Hector got his hat, and the two departed.

They proceeded to the Bowery, into which they turned, and then went on until Third avenue was reached.

"How far up shall we go?" Lemaire asked, as they went up the avenue.

"I don't care—to Harlem if you like," the youth answered.

"I rather think Harlem is a little too far, but what do you say to going up to Fifty-ninth street, then crossing through to Sixth avenue and coming down that way?"

"All right! that suits me."

On they went then at a brisk pace, chatting upon different subjects as they proceeded.

Lemaire was inclined to be talkative, and revealed more of his personal history than he had ever done before.

He had been left an orphan at an early age, and had been forced to look out for himself.

Finally he had drifted to New York and found employment in one of the public hospitals, where he had remained until one of the head doctors, an odd, eccentric old bachelor, took a fancy to him and interested himself in his welfare.

Thanks to the aid of this gentleman, he was able to study medicine, and would undoubtedly have been graduated a full-fledged doctor in time if the old gentleman had not suddenly died.

And death came upon him so abruptly that the man had no time to arrange his earthly affairs, so, although a wealthy man, he made no provision for the support of the youth whom he had befriended, and Lemaire, being without means of support, was obliged to give up his studies and seek for something to do so as to be able to live.

"How unfortunate!" Hector exclaimed.

"Well, I am really not so sure that it was," the other replied. "Of course it seems that, if I had been lucky enough to graduate, my future prosperity would have been assured, but I am not so certain about that as I might be, for I have an idea that I would not have succeeded as a doctor, for when I was giving close application to my studies I used to have such a queer feeling in my head every now and then that I had to give up work for a while."

"That was very strange."

"Yes, I spoke to the old doctor about it, and although he did not say much I could see that he did not like the symptoms."

"You will have to be very careful or you will find yourself with a brain fever on your hands the first thing you know," he declared.

"There is something wrong in your upper story, and you must not attempt to work when you feel one of the strange fits coming on."

"Well, if you became a doctor you could not arrange matters in that way very conveniently," Hector remarked.

"That is exactly what the old doctor said, and he told me that if I was troubled much by these peculiar feelings he would advise me to give up the study of medicine, and go into something else, for it would never do for a doctor to be obliged to give up his practice, and take a rest every now and then because he did not feel quite right in his head."

"That is true, for such a thing would certainly play the mischief with him," Hector remarked.

"He could not hope to keep his practice if he was obliged to desert his patients every now and then."

"Yes, such a thing would never do."

And then the two walked on in silence for a while.

The brain of the disguised detective was full of busy thoughts.

Did not this revelation which the clerk had made in regard to his head-trouble give him a key to the mystery?

Was it possible that Lemaire had underrated his trouble, unknowingly, perhaps?

Was he one of those rare cases, a man who had insane spells without being aware of the fact, and who when he was out of his mind had spells of what the doctors, who make a specialty of treating lunatics, call homicidal mania?

If this was correct it would explain some of the strange features of the mysterious murders. Most certainly the slayer acted, in some respects, like a man who was not in full possession of his senses.

The more the spy reflected upon the matter the stronger became his conviction that he had succeeded in getting a clue to the mystery.

It might be possible that Joe Phenix was mistaken in supposing the Blue Eagle affair had anything to do with the murders.

Lemaire was clerk in the office of the Colorado Syndicate, and therefore well acquainted with the speculators, so when the mad fits came on, and the wild desire to kill took possession of him, it was natural for him to assail the men with whom he was on intimate terms.

The spy remembered that he had read somewhere that wherever any one was seized with a sudden fit of madness, with a homicidal tendency, they generally attacked the people whom in their natural state of reason they loved the best.

If this was true, and it was stated by eminent men, who ought to know, that it was, it would account for Lemaire attacking his employer, and the curiously contrived letters was but a cunning trick, such as insane men have often been known to play, to divert suspicion from himself by making it appear that a mysterious avenger, with a deadly grudge, was dealing the death-blows.

"I can safely say, I think, that at last I have made some progress," was the thought that passed through the brain of the spy.

"This admission which he has made in regard to his mental weakness gives me a clue which if diligently followed up, ought to enable me to unravel the mystery."

And having arrived at this conclusion the disguised detective went on in a much more contented state of mind.

Conversation was soon resumed, and the pair chatted upon different subjects, but though the spy touched upon the Doffheimer case again the other was evidently reluctant to talk any more about the matter, and so the youth did not attempt to force the conversation, for he was afraid of alarming the clerk.

When the pair arrived at Fifty-ninth street they turned into it and went on until they came to Sixth avenue, down which they came on their homeward road.

When they approached the point where Broadway crosses Sixth avenue Lemaire remarked:

"I think we had better go down Broadway for it will be a more pleasant walk than to keep on down the avenue, and then it will bring us nearer home."

"All right, I am satisfied, and I think the idea is a good one," Hector remarked.

"I am thirsty," Lemaire observed, abruptly, halting in front of a corner liquor-saloon.

"This seems like a nice, quiet place, suppose we go in and get a glass of beer."

"I am agreeable," the spy responded, very favorably impressed by the suggestion, for the long walk had made him feel the need of a little liquid refreshment.

"We will go in through the private entrance, into the back room, so we can sit down and rest a bit while we drink our beer," the clerk remarked.

"I don't know how you feel but I am really a little tired, and I know that a ten-minutes' rest will be very agreeable," he continued.

"Well, I am not so fresh as I was when I started," Hector admitted. "And I shall not be sorry to sit down for a few minutes."

So into the saloon the pair went.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRAPPER ENTRAPPED.

THE back room of the saloon into which the two entered, was a small apartment with a few tables and a half a dozen chairs.

There were two men in the room, seated at one of the tables, drinking beer and conversing together in a low tone.

They merely glanced at the young men as they entered and then went on with their conversation.

The spy took their measure with a quick, earnest glance.

They were well-dressed, and had the air of men-about-town, but there was a certain something in their faces which impressed the youth with the belief that they belonged to the hawk tribe.

Men who got their living by preying upon innocents who were not "up to the time of day," to use the slang expression.

But as such fellows are plentiful enough in the neighborhood of the junction of Broadway and Sixth avenue, their presence in the saloon did not surprise, nor alarm the disguised detective, for there wasn't any danger to be apprehended from them.

The "Broadway statues," to give them the common appellation, by which the tribe is known to the police, would not bother themselves by seeking to make victims of a pair of young fellows of the stamp of the clerk and his companion.

They were after far bigger game—high-rollers, who sought the "tenderloin" precinct, as the district is termed in police and reportorial circles, to have a good time; young men, with more money than brains, who were anxious to paint New York red, and who after getting a certain quantity of wine on board fell easy victims to these experienced birds of prey, who quickly relieved them of all their cash, and if the opportunity was a favorable one, also confiscated their watches and jewelry.

Lemaire did not even take the trouble to cast a glance at the men, but after bidding his companion be seated put his head through the swing door, which communicated with the saloon, and ordered "two beers."

Then he took a seat at the table where Hector had placed himself.

"Well, now that I have got comfortably seated I find out that I am pretty tired," Lemaire remarked.

"We have taken a good, long walk, and a man really never knows how tired he is until he sits down to rest," the spy replied.

"This little halt will fresh us up, and I don't doubt the walk will do us good," Lemaire observed.

"No doubt!"

"I feel sure that I will be the better for it, for I know that I do not take exercise enough."

At this point the man brought in the beer, received his money and departed.

"This looks like good stuff," the clerk remarked holding his glass up to the light, and watching the bubbles as they swam in the amber-colored fluid.

"Yes, and I have no doubt it will be very refreshing."

"Well, here's to our better acquaintance," the clerk remarked.

The other nodded assent, and then the two took a liberal draught of the beer.

"Aha! that is what I call refreshing!" the clerk exclaimed.

"Yes, it is good."

"I am glad that the idea occurred to me to stop in here and rest a bit."

"It was a happy thought."

"Well, let us make a finish of it and be off."

The pair drained their glasses.

"As I said before, I am sure this will do me good, but I am not so certain in regard to the effect upon you," and there was a peculiar, baleful light in Lemaire's eyes as he spoke.

Keen-witted indeed was the spy, and the thought instantly came to him that there was a covert threat hidden in the speech.

But as he began to meditate upon the matter the youth suddenly became conscious that there was a strange feeling in his head, and a sort of dreamy languor was creeping over him.

He essayed to rise, but found, to his astonishment that he was not able to move, seemingly having lost all power in his legs.

But his head was not yet so much affected as to completely interfere with the working of his brain, so he was not unable to comprehend what had taken place.

He had fallen into a trap; the glass of beer had been drugged, and he was helpless in the power of the man whom he had set out to hunt down.

The trapper was entrapped.

"Hello, old fellow, what is the matter with you?" Lemaire exclaimed, in a jocular way. "Has the beer gone to your head? Well, well, a few rounds of beer ought not to have done you up after this fashion!"

The birds of prey had stopped their conversation, and were now intently regarding the two.

"My friend is from the country," Lemaire explained, addressing the men. "And in his desire to see the sights with me to-night he has drank a little more than he is able to carry. I have a cab outside, and if you will give me a hand to put him in, so I can carry him home, I will be much obliged."

"Certainly! glad to oblige you!" exclaimed the taller of the two sports, as he and his companion rose.

"Anybody could go through him now without any trouble," the other sport suggested. "But I don't suppose it would be worth while for any one to try the trick, for he doesn't look as if he would pan out very rich."

"No, he hasn't got anything worth taking," the clerk replied. "He is only a greenhorn, and about broke."

"What is your game in wasting a good dose on him, then?" asked the man in a dissatisfied way.

The barkeeper, who had stuck his head in through the swing door, overheard this speech, and promptly took the man to task.

"Say, Bill, you want to keep your nose out of other people's business, unless you want to get in trouble!" he exclaimed.

"This gent"—and he nodded to Lemaire—"is on the dead level, and has done the square thing by me, and I don't want any one to give him any back talk in this place."

"Give him a hand with the lousy cove to his cab, and I will do as much for you some time—see?"

"Certainly!" the tall sport cried with alacrity. "You mustn't mind what Billy says. He always has to do just so much chinning, but he doesn't mean anything by it."

"That is all right, but he ought to be careful how he slings his chin-music around, for it don't pay for a gent to interfere in business wot don't concern him!" the barkeeper declared with a great deal of dignity.

"Ye kin bet yer life on that!" the tall sport asserted.

Then the two assisted Lemaire to carry the helpless youth to the cab, which stood a few paces from the door.

The cabman had apparently been warned, for he was ready with the door open when the three came out of the saloon with the victim.

A drunken man being put into a cab by his

friends is too common a sight to excite any attention in the quarter where this event took place, so no one paid any attention to the matter.

After the two were in the cab, the driver mounted to his box and away they went.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE SNARE.

THE dose which the disguised detective had taken in the drugged beer was powerful enough to render his physical forces helpless, but though it dulled his brain and deprived him of the power of speech, yet it was not strong enough to prevent him from understanding all that went on around him.

So the spy was conscious of being taken from the saloon and put into the cab, and conscious that, all through the long ride which followed, the clerk, who sat on the opposite seat, glared on him with the eyes of a demon.

The tables had been turned with a vengeance.

At last the cab stopped. The driver opened the door and, with Lemaire's aid, carried the helpless Hector into a lonely house which stood in the midst of a straggling grove of old trees.

There was no other house in sight, and the road which led to it was merely a lane, narrow, and overgrown with weeds and bushes, evidently but little traveled. At the very end of it the house was situated.

The building itself was a small one-story and attic wooden affair, an old farm-house, apparently, but now deserted and left to go to ruin.

All the windows were guarded with heavy shutters, and a more weird, uncanny place it would have been hard to find within a hundred miles of the metropolis, and yet it was not over an hour's drive from the center of the city, but situated in the low, swampy country bordering on the upper part of the East River.

After the cabman had helped Lemaire carry the prisoner into the house, depositing him on a heap of straw which was in the center of the main room on the ground floor, the clerk instructed the man to wait for him at the end of the lane, then the driver departed.

There was a lantern burning in the room, hanging from a nail in the wall, so there was ample light.

After the cabman departed, Lemaire listened until the sound of the carriage wheels died away in the distance.

Then he went to the center of the room and lifted up a trap-door which had been hid from view by an old piece of carpet.

The opening of the trap revealed a narrow flight of steps leading down into the cellar, which extended under the house, although looking at the building from the outside there was no indication to show that there was such a thing as a cellar under the house.

After getting the trap-door open Lemaire dragged Hector to the edge of the trap and slid him down, feet first, into the cellar.

Then, taking the lantern, Lemaire descended the steps.

There was a hook in one of the cellar beams, and the clerk hung the lantern upon it.

Then he dragged the helpless youth into a corner of the cellar, where a rude bed of straw had been made.

From his pocket he produced a pair of handcuffs and a set of ankle chains and proceeded to put them upon the prisoner.

"There, now, my ingenious friend, I think you are so securely fettered that you will not be able to get out of this cage until I am ready to allow you to depart, and perhaps I shall not come to a decision of that kind until I think it is time to send your soul on a trip to another world," he muttered, with a dark look.

Then he drew a small vial from his pocket, uncorked it, and forced the contents in between the firm-set lips of the helpless man.

"I think it will be well for me to have a little conversation with you, my esteemed friend, and so I will put you in a condition to again have the use of your tongue," Lemaire murmured, as he administered the contents of the vial to Hector.

"One drug to cloud the brain and render helpless the physical powers, and a second to remove the effects of the first."

There was an old keg in the cellar, and after giving the potion to the prisoner, Lemaire took a seat on the keg and watched the other with a sardonic smile.

The first dose, which Hector had taken so unconsciously in the glass of beer, had acted with marvelous quickness, and this second was about as rapid in its action, for within a couple of minutes after he swallowed it the disguised detective began to feel like himself again.

The mists cleared away from his brain and his strength returned.

He rose to a sitting posture and stared around him in wonder.

Although he was fully conscious of all that passed during his enforced stupor, yet the spy considered it wise to pretend that he did not know what had occurred.

"What in Heaven's name is the meaning of this?" he exclaimed in wondering accents, as he gazed around him with amazed eyes.

"You do not exactly understand it, eh?" the other asked, with a grim smile.

"No, indeed, I do not—what does it all mean?" Hector replied. "Where am I, and how on earth did I come here, and what is the meaning of these handcuffs?"

"I say, old fellow, we are not in jail, are we?" he exclaimed, as though the thought had suddenly occurred to him.

"Well, it is a prison, and yet it is not a jail," Lemaire replied.

"Well, that is a sort of a conundrum, isn't it?" the youth remarked, pretending to be greatly bewildered. "And I never was good at that sort of thing, either."

"Hang me if I understand it at all!" the youth exclaimed abruptly.

"I can remember getting a glass of beer, and then I seemed to have dropped off to sleep, for I don't recollect anything more until I woke up just now."

"I say, old fellow, the glass of beer didn't go to my head and make me do any damage, did it?"

"Oh, no; you haven't hurt anybody."

"Well, I am glad of that; but how on earth did I come here?"

And the speaker cast another look full of bewilderment around.

"My friend, you have played a pretty good game, but, keen as you are, you cannot entrap me," Lemaire remarked, with a baleful smile.

"What on earth do you mean?" the other asked, staring in astonishment.

"I don't suppose that you have any idea that I guessed what your game was, right from the beginning?" the clerk announced.

"Guessed what my game was?" the youth responded in amazement.

"Yes, the very moment that the landlady told me that two gentlemen, an uncle and nephew, had taken rooms in the house, representing themselves to be connected with the press, I had a presentiment that they were bloodhounds in disguise."

"What an idea!" the youth exclaimed.

"It is of no use for you to attempt to deceive me!" the other returned. "My instinct warned me that foes were on my track as soon as I heard of your arrival, and then when I made your acquaintance, and you tried with such cunning maneuvers to win my confidence, I comprehended that if I was not careful how I conducted myself I would be in the toils almost before I was aware of it."

Lemaire spoke in a gloomy way, seemingly much depressed.

"I say, old fellow, all this is Greek to me, and I don't know what you are talking about!" the spy declared.

The other shook his head in a melancholy way.

"Of course it is only natural for you, under the circumstances, to try to get out of it," the clerk declared. "But words will not answer, for I know the truth, and you cannot persuade me to the contrary, no matter how smoothly you talk."

"I am really lost in wonder though, when I consider the circumstances, to think that your principal was able to single me out, for I thought I had covered my tracks up so skillfully that the smartest detective in the world would not be able to get on the trail."

"This Joe Phenix must be a wonderful man!" Lemaire announced.

"Joe Phenix!" the spy exclaimed.

"Yes, your master."

"My master, eh? Well, that is news to me, I must say."

"Do not waste time in idle denials for it will not do you any good," the other declared.

"I am willing to admit to you that it is a great mystery to me how it could be possible for the man to pick me out," Lemaire continued in a reflective way.

"I thought I had covered every point, so carefully that suspicion could not possibly attach itself to me, but events have proved that I did not give the bloodhound credit for being one half as smart as he really is."

"Your uncle, I presume is Joe Phenix?"

"Really, as I told you before, I don't know what you are driving at, and if you think that I am anything but what I appear to be you are making the biggest kind of a mistake!" the spy declared, endeavoring to appear as innocent as possible.

Lemaire shook his head.

"As I told you, you are only wasting time in denying the truth!" the clerk declared in an angry way. "I know that the bloodhound is on my track, and I propose to treat him just as the fugitive savages treat the real bloodhound when he follows so closely on their track that, no matter how much they may twist and turn, it is impossible for them to shake him off; they select a commanding position, stand at bay and kill the dog!"

Ferocious indeed was the look which came over the face of the clerk as he hissed out the sentence.

"A dead dog cannot follow!" he continued. "Ah, what a deal of truth there is in that little sentence," and there was a demon-like grin on his face as he uttered the remark.

"I suppose that you are intelligent enough to comprehend what I intend to do?" he continued. "Well, no, I don't think that I understand what you are driving at at all," the prisoner replied slowly. "As I told you in the beginning, all this talk is like so much Greek to me."

"All right! go ahead! keep up this pretended ignorance if you think you can make anything by so doing!" the clerk remarked in a sarcastic way. "It is my belief that you cannot, but you may be a better judge of the matter than I am."

"I see that it isn't any use to talk to you about the thing, for you have made up your mind in regard to it, and so I shall not attempt to change your opinion," the spy remarked with an air of resignation.

"No, it is, as I told you, only a waste of time!" Lemaire exclaimed, decidedly.

"I know all about the affair and you cannot deceive me, no matter how hard you try."

"I am well aware that you are a tool of this detective, Joe Phenix, and you took up your quarters in the house in Tenth street for the sole purpose of entrapping me, and if I succeeded in turning the tables upon you it is because I am more than a match for you and your principal in trickery."

"When I discovered that you had a suspicion that I was the man you wanted, then I realized that it was going to be a struggle to the death between us."

"At first I thought of taking refuge in flight," Lemaire continued.

"But then when I came to think the matter over I arrived at the conclusion that it would be useless for me to attempt to seek safety in that way. If this bloodhound of a Phenix was skillful enough to guess that I was the man he wanted, when he had absolutely nothing to go upon, then it seemed to me to be certain that no matter where I should go or how I might conceal myself he would be certain in the end to discover me, and then I made up my mind to fight."

"This merciless detective had entered the lists against me; I would meet him with his own weapons, and see if I could not compass his destruction, just as he was endeavoring to compass mine."

"The first point in the game was to entrap you, the spy whom he had placed upon my track, and this I have succeeded in doing without any trouble."

"Upon my word this sort of talk makes me think that you are going crazy!" the captive declared.

"If I am out of my senses you will find that, as the poet says, there is a deal of method in my madness," Lemaire replied in a vindictive way.

"You are the hireling, and I have you safe and sound," the clerk continued. "Now then I must set my wits to work to capture your master."

"If I can succeed in getting Joe Phenix in my power you can depend upon it that I shall make short work of both of you."

"You are clean mad and no mistake!" the spy exclaimed. "And from the way you are going on I think the chances are big that you will fetch up in a lunatic asylum before you are many hours older!"

Lemaire laughed in a sarcastic way at this declaration.

"If you are wise you will pray that no one will lay me by the heels yet, awhile," he remarked.

"Why should I trouble my head about the matter either one way or the other?" the spy asked.

"Because your fate depends upon it," the clerk retorted.

"Of course you do not know where you are, so I will explain the situation to you."

"When I came to the conclusion a week ago, that the bloodhound had succeeded in getting upon my trail, and realized that it was only a question of time, for in the long run he would be almost certain to hunt me down, I made up my mind to endeavor to destroy the man-hunter before he should destroy me, so set to work to arrange a trap."

"I happened to know of this old, deserted house, and it immediately came to my mind that it would be just the place for a prison."

"There is not another dwelling within sight; it is at the end of a lonely lane, and you could stand at the door, screaming at the top of your lungs, and no one could possibly hear you."

"Nor is it probable that any one will come this way, for it is out of the regular road, and, besides, bears the reputation of being haunted, so that none of the dwellers in the neighborhood will come within gun-shot of the place if they can help themselves."

"Well, well, this is a nice kind of a shanty to shut a fellow up in, I must say," the spy remarked in a careless way, apparently not much affected by the peculiar position in which he was placed.

Lemaire scowled; the indifference of the captive annoyed him.

"You don't appear to understand that you are completely in my power and perfectly helpless!" the clerk exclaimed.

"Oh, I am not borrowing any trouble, for I

have an idea that I will get out of this scrape without getting much damaged," the spy retorted.

"You have planned the affair with a deal of cunning, and the more I think about it the more satisfied I am that your head isn't right," Hector continued.

"But I am thinking there is a good chance of this fit passing away, and then you will be in as great a hurry to get me out of this den as you were to put me in it."

"Ah, it is idle to waste words upon you!" Lemaire exclaimed, angrily, springing to his feet as he spoke.

"I will leave you to reflect in solitude upon your position while I set to work to entrap your principal," he added, and then he ascended the steps, taking the lantern with him, leaving the disguised detective to meditate in the darkness upon his extremely unpleasant position.

"He will not snare Joe Phenix though!" the spy declared, confidently.

CHAPTER XX.

THE MAN-HUNTER'S GAME.

THE spy was right in his surmise that the crafty clerk would not find it an easy matter to match wits with the veteran detective.

Joe Phenix had more than one string to his bow, and he was not satisfied with resting because he had installed the actress-detective in the house as a spy upon the clerk.

He realized that he was dealing with as cunning a criminal as he had ever attempted to bring to justice, and so he resolved to put forth extra exertion to capture him.

After having arranged the lodging-house business to his satisfaction he proceeded to organize a most elaborate shadow system.

It is the usual custom of a detective when he tries a game of this kind to employ one or two men, seldom over two, but on this occasion Joe Phenix engaged a dozen of the best "shadows" that there were in the city, and as he had an intimate acquaintance with all the people who had proved themselves to be valuable in this peculiar line, the six men, four women and two youths whom he employed represented the best expert talent in the spy line that the metropolis could boast.

First he took pains to have all the shadows make themselves familiar with the personal appearance of the man upon whom they were to play the spy, and then the shadows were introduced to each other in the various disguises which they had chosen to assume, so they would be able to act in concert.

Joe Phenix's idea in putting a dozen shadows on the case was that as he believed he was dealing with an unusually brainy criminal, one who would be prompt to take the alarm, he must use extra precautions, or else his bird would be apt to take flight before he could secure such proofs of his guilt as to render his conviction certain.

If one or two people were employed to do the shadowing, it was the detective's idea that such a cunning fellow as the clerk would be apt to detect that a watch had been placed upon him, for he would be almost certain to notice that there were some people who seemed to pay more attention to his movements than strangers should, but if the spies were constantly changed, the chances were good that the man would not be able to detect that he was being shadowed.

No two of the spies were alike in appearance, but each one was a representative of some familiar city type, very common to the metropolis, and such as are to be encountered daily in the streets.

The veteran detective arranged it so that a watch should be kept on Lemaire whenever he made his appearance in the street, whether he came from the lodging-house, or from the downtown office, and some of the shadows were on the watch all night long, Joe Phenix having secured rooms in a house on the other side of the street directly opposite to the one where Lemaire lived, for the shadow's use.

It was the detective's idea that although the clerk appeared to keep regular hours that it was possible he stole out at night after he was supposed to go to bed.

This surmise was correct, for on the two nights preceding the one on which he took the walk with the youth, Lemaire stole quietly out of the lodging house a little after seven o'clock and proceeded up-town, and on both occasions he managed to give the shadows the slip in the neighborhood of the junction of Broadway and Sixth avenue.

When this fact was reported to Joe Phenix, he immediately conjectured that the man was up to some mischief, and on the third day he drew off some of the shadows who had kept a watch on the office building, allowed them to rest during the day, and put them on duty after nightfall on upper Broadway where it crosses Sixth avenue.

Thanks to this wise movement, Joe Phenix was not only advised of the fact that the young men had gone out for a walk, but when they went into the saloon, where the drugged beer was served to the disguised spy, he was promptly apprised of the fact.

Having a suspicion that Lemaire was up to some game in the neighborhood, Joe Phenix had secured a room on Broadway, near Thirty-fourth street, so as to be ready to act promptly.

The taking away of the spy in the coach was a move, though, that even the vigilant detective did not foresee, and so he had not made any provision for such a move.

As the coach went off at a brisk pace, it was of course impossible for the shadows—there were two of them on the watch—to follow it, and as it happened, although the men did their best to get a cab, so as to give chase to the one in which the two departed, yet they were not able to do it in time to follow on the trail.

In hot haste then they ran to Joe Phenix and reported what had occurred.

As soon as he heard the recital, the veteran thief-taker understood just exactly what had happened—understood it as well as though he had planned the affair himself.

He knew all about the saloon and the man who kept it.

It was one of the dens of the metropolis, where drugged liquor was served to unsuspecting strangers so that they might be robbed with impunity by the men who brought them into the place.

Lemaire had made an arrangement with the saloon-keeper, and the disguised detective had been rendered insensible by the liquor which the other had persuaded him to drink in the place.

But the motive for such a deed?

Ah, that was a puzzle!

Not for the purpose of robbing the youth, for the game would not be worth the candle.

Then too if the man had been after his companion's valuables he would not have taken the trouble to lug him off in the cab after the drugged liquor rendered him insensible.

The only possible explanation of the mystery, as far as the man-hunter could see, was that the clerk had discovered the youth was a spy and in his anger had determined upon getting him out of the way.

Joe Phenix was seriously annoyed by the circumstance, the more because it was so entirely unexpected.

"Hem—the fellow has caught me napping," he murmured. "I never expected that he would try so bold a stroke as this, and I must take immediate measures to check his game."

"What can he be up to?"

"Can it be possible that in his rage at discovering there is a spy upon his track he has taken it into his head to kill the watcher?"

Joe Phenix grew a trifle nervous over the idea.

Of all the Specials whom he had ever employed he had the highest regard for this particular one whom the clerk had captured.

"Unless the man is a born devil he will not dare to kill his victim!" he exclaimed.

"And at all events, even if he is thinking of taking so desperate a step as that, he will surely not proceed to the taking off immediately, so if I act promptly I will be pretty certain to be in time to prevent any serious consequences."

As the shadows were not able to track the cab they had sense enough to do the next best thing under the circumstances, and that was to find out all about the cab-driver.

Of course it was evident that the fellow belonged to the crooked fraternity, or else he would never have been mixed up in an affair of this kind, so the shadows knew just how to go to work to find out all the particulars about the man, and they did the business so well that when they came to Joe Phenix they were able to give him full information regarding the driver.

"Patsey MacFad, eh?" Joe Phenix remarked in a meditative way. "Let me see, although I know Patsey pretty well by reputation I don't think I ever came personally in contact with him."

"He is one of the hardest nuts in the city," the shadow asserted. "I don't think there is a driver in town who has a worse record, but as he is a great politician, and has a lot of friends who are in with the big guns who run New York, he has always managed to squeeze out of the scrapes he has got into without having to stand much punishment."

"I understand; if he is brought into court, he is able to call upon men who have such a powerful pull that it is a hard matter to do much of anything with him."

"Exactly! he is in with the gang, and it is a hard matter to down him."

"It is one of those cases when it is better for me to see the man and try to exert a little persuasive eloquence upon him than to attempt to frighten him with any law business," Joe Phenix observed.

"If you are willing to put up the cold cash, you can do what you like with Patsey—that is, in reason, you know, and you can bet your sweet life upon it!" the shadow exclaimed, emphatically.

"Pass the word round to the men that Patsey is to be told there is a job for his cab as soon as anybody catches sight of him. There is a sick

man to be carried to a hospital from this address."

"All right, sir, I will attend to it," the shadow remarked.

"And it would be well for the man who sees Patsey to suggest to him that, as the parties are in a hurry to get the fellow out of the house, it is probable he can get a big price; give him the idea, you know, that there is something crooked about the affair—the man has been hurt in a fight, and all mixed up in the affair are anxious to keep the thing away from the police."

"Oh, yes, I understand; and you can depend upon my giving Patsey the proper kind of a steer," the shadow declared as he departed.

"My man has taken the first trick, but I will try hard for the second!" Joe Phenix declared.

CHAPTER XXI.

A NOVEL MOVE.

As soon as the shadow departed, Joe Phenix also sought the street.

"Western and I ought to be able to attend to this matter without outside help," the man-hunter murmured as he took his way to the residence of General Purvis.

"I do not think the general will run much risk if I take Western away from his house for a few hours," he continued.

"The other shadows are still on the watch around the general's house, and they ought to be able to ward off all danger; besides this fellow is too busy just now to attack the general, unless he has assistants, which I doubt, for I fancy he is alone in this matter."

Joe Phenix found the general and Western engaged in a sociable game of cards, and Purvis felt in excellent spirits.

"I fancy that the precautions which you have taken, Mr. Phenix, have frightened this rascal away," the general remarked. "He has not made a move for some time now."

"Well, I am not satisfied with merely scaring the fellow off," the veteran detective replied.

"It is my game to catch him."

"Certainly, of course!" the general exclaimed. "That is what you are after, and I certainly hope you will be able to accomplish your object."

"I will do the best I know how, and that is all any man can do," Joe Phenix observed.

"Have you made any discoveries?" Purvis asked.

"Nothing to amount to anything as yet, still I am on a track which I hope will lead me to some good results, but it is going to be a very difficult matter to trap this rogue, and it will undoubtedly take time; in the long-run though, I hope to succeed."

"You are a cautious fellow, Phenix!" the general declared. "So different from the usual run of detectives, that I have chanced to meet."

"The average man in that line is as full of mystery as an egg is of meat, and whenever he is employed on a case of this kind, in reply to questions as to how he is getting on, always declares he has succeeded in getting hold of important clues, and is working them up so successfully that in a very short time he will have his game safe and sound!"

Joe Phenix laughed.

"Yes, you are right, that is the jargon of the trade," he replied.

"And the joke of the thing is that after a month or two has gone by, and the acute detective has not succeeded in getting his man, if you ask him how he is progressing he will be sure to give the self-same old fairy story about important clues, and his expectation of making an arrest at any moment."

"It is a time-honored custom, general, and you must not blame the men who when asked for news, when they haven't any, take refuge in declaring that they expect to have some soon, and then, too, when a man sets up to be a Great Mogul it will not do for him to admit that he doesn't know any more than a common mortal."

"Ah, yes, I comprehend; there is cheating in all trades but ours, eh, Mr. Phenix?" the general remarked, laughing.

"That is the idea, I think."

Then the veteran detective came to the object of his visit and asked if the general could manage to get along without Western until the morning, explaining that he had a good guard without the house.

"Certainly, of course!" the general exclaimed. "Delighted to be able to oblige you, Mr. Phenix. And, really, I am not afraid of danger, even if Mr. Western is not on guard, for as I have not heard anything of the fellow for some time I have an idea that you, with your precautions, have succeeded in frightening him away."

"It is possible, of course, that it may be so, but I do not think it wise to relax in our vigilance," the man-hunter remarked.

"No, no, certainly not!" the general declared. "Keep right on—redouble your efforts, if any change is made, for I shall never feel really easy in my mind until the fellow is safely lodged in jail."

"When I know that he is behind the bars I shall breathe more freely."

"You may rely upon my going ahead as fast

as possible," Joe Phenix affirmed as he departed in company with Western.

After the two reached the street the veteran detective explained to his lieutenant what had taken place.

Tony Western was amazed.

"Well, well! this fellow is playing an exceedingly bold game," he declared.

"Yes, but I think he has made a mistake in taking this step, for by so doing he has given me a chance to get at him, unless I am greatly mistaken."

"Yes, that is true; but what on earth do you suppose made him try a game of this kind?"

"The man is desperate, and when he discovered—as I feel sure he did—that the supposed country youth was a police spy, who had come to the house for the express purpose of keeping a watch on him, he made up his mind to get rid of him."

"It is about as bold and as desperate a deed as I ever heard of in all my experience," Tony Western remarked, thoughtfully.

"That is true; but it is my opinion that this fellow is not quite right in his mind, and therefore ventures upon enterprises that a man in the full possession of his senses would never even dream of attempting. The history of his crimes leads me to that conclusion, and in this instance he has not stopped to calculate upon the risk of getting caught."

"All he thought of was that a spy had succeeded in getting upon his track and that he must remove that spy, no matter how great a risk he might run in so doing."

"It certainly seems as if you had figured the thing out correctly."

"And by making this move I fancy the man has given me a chance at him, as I said before," Joe Phenix argued.

"Few criminals are they who do not make a mistake of this kind sooner or later."

"No doubt about the truth of that," the lieutenant remarked.

"And if it were not so the officers of the law would not succeed in capturing as many rascals as they do," the veteran detective remarked.

"Oh, yes, it is the blunders of the rogues that more often lead to their arrest than the smartness of the officers," Tony Western admitted.

"No doubt about it," Joe Phenix affirmed.

"And I have an idea that our man in this case has made a mistake which will be apt to be an extremely costly one to him."

"The first thing to do is to find out from the cab-driver, this Patsey MacFad, where he carried our man."

"You will probably have a hard time in getting the truth out of MacFad," Tony Western observed.

"Although I never happened to meet the man, yet I know all about him, and he is as tough a rascal as you can scare up in his line in all New York."

"Yes, I know all about the fellow, although I never had occasion to encounter him personally, but I fancy I will be able to persuade him to speak after I get him into my house," Joe Phenix remarked, with a strong accent on the word persuade.

Tony Western laughed.

"You calculate to put the screws on him?"

"Yes; he is one of that kind of men whom it is not possible to handle in the ordinary way," the veteran bloodhound replied.

"He is a man with a pull, I believe."

"Exactly, and if I should attempt to get at him in the usual way, through the agency of the police, he would simply laugh at me, particularly in a case of this kind when it would be difficult for me to prove that he knew there was anything wrong about the matter," Joe Phenix explained.

"Yes, unless a man of his kind is caught dead to rights, so there isn't a chance for him to get out of the scrape, it is always difficult, if not absolutely impossible, to do anything with him."

"I should only waste my time if I attempted to get anything out of him in the usual way," the veteran detective remarked.

"The only way to handle such fellows is to get them in such a position that they are perfectly helpless," he continued.

"The man is a thorough brute, and about all that he respects is brute force," he added.

During the conversation the pair had been proceeding toward Joe Phenix's house, and at this point they turned from the avenue into the side street upon which it was situated.

CHAPTER XXII.

A SUMMARY PROCEEDING.

JOE PHENIX consulted his watch.

"It is a little after ten," he remarked. "So we will have plenty of time to prepare for the reception of our visitor, I think."

"Of course I have no idea where my Special has been taken, or how long it will be before the driver returns, but as the shadows describe the cabman as driving straight up Broadway, it is likely that the rascal has secured some hiding-place in the upper part of the city, and if so the cabman will not probably return to his accustomed haunts until somewhere around eleven."

"The more I think about the affair the greater becomes my wonder that the fellow should dare to attempt to play such a game as this," Tony Western remarked.

"It is my opinion that the man was so enraged when he discovered a spy had succeeded in getting upon his track that he made up his mind to put the spy out of the way no matter how great was the risk which he run."

"That certainly seems to be, the only reasonable explanation," the other replied.

The arrival of the pair at the house of the detective at this moment put an end to the conversation.

They entered and Joe Phenix conducted his lieutenant to his dressing-room, as the bloodhound termed the apartment where he kept all his disguises.

"As I think it is our game not to allow this rascal to know who it is that puts up the job on him we will disguise ourselves," Joe Phenix said.

"I do not doubt that I will succeed in getting the information out of him, although I do not doubt he will be as stubborn as a mule, and after he is released he may be foolish enough to think he can kick up a row about the matter, so we must take measures to make it a difficult matter for him to identify either of us."

Tony Western thought this was a good idea and said as much.

"We will get ourselves up as a couple of Dagos, for a disguise of that kind will answer our purpose and it is easily assumed."

Then the pair proceeded to dress, and when they got through the operation they looked exactly like the average sons of sunny Italy who monopolize the fruit business of the metropolis.

They were attired in the rough, ill-fitting garments that the common Italian wears, had stained their hands and faces to a dark olive tint, and put on wigs and beards of wiry, jet-black, hair.

In fact their disguise was so perfect that if they had gone out upon the street it is certain that the first policeman they met would have ordered them to "move on," fully convinced that two such miserable Dagos must be up to some mischief.

After they had finished dressing the two repaired to the lower story and there Joe Phenix made certain preparations, which he considered to be necessary for the proper reception of the visitor.

"Now everything is in readiness, and the quicker Mr. Patsey MacFad makes his appearance the better I will like it," Joe Phenix remarked as the two proceeded to the front room and sat down to wait the coming of the cabman.

"The man will be decidedly astonished by his reception," Tony Western observed with a smile.

"Oh, yes, undoubtedly, and it always gives me a deal of satisfaction to work a game of this kind on such a fellow as MacFad," Joe Phenix remarked.

"He is one of the overbearing brutes who has little respect for anything but hard knocks," the veteran detective continued.

"A man might spend hours in attempting to reason with him, and he would only have his labors for his pains."

"Yes, that is correct. Thanks to the pull he has with the gang he knows that if he is unlucky enough to get caught in any ugly scrape some of the political bosses will be sure to come forward and beg him off," Western declared.

"Very true, and New York will never be free from crime until the time comes when political influence will not be brought to bear to save these ward heelers from the punishment due to their crimes," Joe Phenix announced.

"I am afraid it will be many a long year before that time will come!" Tony Western declared.

"There is a gradual improvement," Joe Phenix remarked. "The shoulder-bitters, and the ward heelers, do not have the power which they used to possess, and the politicians don't dare to override the law as in the good old days when it was a common thing for an industrious man to vote a dozen times at one election."

There was a striking clock upon the mantelpiece and it sounded eleven at this point.

"Our man ought to be here pretty soon now," Joe Phenix observed. "But the time of his coming depends, of course, upon how far he had to go."

"Do you suppose he had any idea of the desperate game which this Lemaire is playing?" Tony Western asked, reflectively.

"Oh, no, the clerk is too shrewd to allow him to suspect what was going on, for if MacFad had any suspicion of the truth he would be apt to betray the other for the sake of the reward," Joe Phenix answered.

"Yes, that is so; the large sums offered for the apprehension of the murderer would be certain to make the cabman betray Lemaire."

"I think I understand how the thing was worked," the veteran detective remarked in a thoughtful way.

"When Lemaire got the suspicion that my

Special was a police spy, who had come to the lodging-house for the express purpose of watching him, he made up his mind to remove the spy, and set to work to see how he could best do it."

"It is a wonder that he did not resort to murder immediately," the lieutenant suggested.

"Yes, it is like the blood-thirsty character of the man to strike down his victim without warning, but I fancy the reason why he refrained from so doing was because he was anxious to find out from the spy how he came to be upon his track."

"Yes, I think you have hit upon the truth," Tony Western remarked after a moment's thought.

"It would be natural for him to worry over the circumstance, and he would be desirous of finding out just how much was known in regard to his guilt."

"That is the way I figured the thing out," Joe Phenix observed.

"If he killed the spy outright he would certainly put a stop to the watching as far as this one particular man was concerned, but that would not guarantee that no others were not on the track, so, clearly, his game was to find some secluded quarters, then kidnap the spy and try to make him reveal the plans that were on foot."

"Yes, yes, that was the game that he ought to play, decidedly!"

"It was an easy matter to arrange with the saloon-keeper to drug the liquor, and then MacFad was employed to carry the victim away, but the chances are a thousand to one that Lemaire was careful to arrange the matter so that the cabman had no suspicion that it was anything but a common drugging case."

"Yes, yes, undoubtedly."

At this point the conversation was interrupted by the ringing of the door-bell.

"There is our man, I think!" Joe Phenix exclaimed.

And then the two hastened to receive the applicant for admission.

The gas was burning so dimly in the hall that it was all any one could do to see which way to go, but as the two were perfectly familiar with the premises, it did not trouble them.

Tony Western had a heavy blanket, and concealed himself so that when the door opened he would be hid from sight.

Joe Phenix held a pair of patent handcuffs, with a peculiar spring, in his left hand, which he thrust behind him as he opened the door.

As he anticipated, it was the cabman, Patsey MacFad, who had rung the bell.

The driver was a lanky Irish-American, with an evil-looking face.

"I come arter der man, see!" he exclaimed, as he marched into the entry.

"Yes, yes, dot is alla right," Joe Phenix replied, assuming the voice of an Italian who did not speak as good English as he might.

"Come along—dis way!" and he retreated a few steps so as to allow the man to enter.

As soon as MacFad was clear of the door, Western shot in, and then threw the heavy blanket over the cabman's head, and at the same moment Joe Phenix grabbed him with a grip of iron.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TAMING A TOUGH.

MACFAD was taken so completely by surprise that he did not have an opportunity to make a resistance before Joe Phenix had the handcuffs snapped upon his wrists, and then Tony Western passed a strong cord around his body, over the blanket, pinioning his arms to his side.

The cabman kicked and struggled, endeavoring to cry out in alarm, but the heavy blanket smothered his voice, and then too as soon as the two assailants had him securely pinioned they forced him along the entry to the rear door, which led to the cellar; and down into the underground apartment he was borne, despite his struggles.

The reader who has followed the fortunes of the veteran detective through the novels which bear his name, will perhaps remember that in one of them we devoted considerable space to a description of the peculiarities of the lower regions of the man-hunter's abode.

He had two cellars, one under the other, a device which the old-fashioned counterfeiters were fond of employing so that they might be able to coin their base-money without fear of detection.

When an examination was made of the first cellar, there was nothing about it to suggest there was another apartment underneath, for the door leading to the stairs which gave access to the second apartment was so carefully concealed that it would be almost an impossibility for any one to find it.

Into the sub-cellar the struggling cab-driver was carried.

A lantern hanging from one of the beams illuminated the apartment.

There was a peculiar chair, with a high back, broad arms, and a foot-rest, something after the style of a barber-chair, standing near the rear wall, so placed that the rays of the lantern shone down full upon it.

Into this chair the pair forced MacFad, and he

had no sooner taken his seat than his weight set concealed machinery in operation.

Steel bands sprang out and gripped his arms and legs so that he was perfectly helpless.

Then the detective and his lieutenant proceeded to remove the cord which was bound around him, and the blanket which had smothered his cries.

Never was there a man more surprised or more angry than the driver when his sight was again restored to him.

"Say, what are you two blokes up to, anyway, hey?" he demanded, in a hoarse voice, for he was out of breath on account of his violent struggles, and his rage had caused his face to become almost as red as a lobster.

"You two miserable Dagoes!" he continued, more and more enraged as he glared at his black-bearded, olive-skinned captors. "Jest you lemme get a fair show at you, and if I don't pound the daylight out of you inside of two minutes I don't want a cent!"

"Oh, yes, you badda man!" Joe Phenix responded, in a sarcastic way.

"W'ot do you mean by playing a monkey trick of this kind on me, anyway—w'ot little game are you up to?" the driver fairly roared.

"You drive a cab, eh?" Joe Phenix questioned.

"Yes, I drive a cab; but what is that to you, you miserable copper-colored imp?" the angry Patsey retorted.

"How about da young mans you taka from da saloon to-night—wherea you carry him, eh?" the veteran detective asked.

An expression of amazement appeared on the face of the prisoner.

"Oh! that is your game, is it?" he exclaimed. "And have you got me into this 'ere trap jest for the purpose of pumping me about that bloke!"

"We wanta know where you taka him, hey?" Joe Phenix responded, taking care to play the role of the Italian so perfectly that the other had no suspicion that he was not what he appeared to be.

"Oh, you do, eh?" the cab-driver cried, sarcastically.

"Yes; 'spose you tell, hey, we will let you go," Joe Phenix answered.

"And if I don't tell, what then?" MacFad exclaimed, in an extremely ugly way.

"Mebbe we make it hot for you, hey?"

This threat infuriated the cab-driver so that he fairly roared for a few minutes, abusing his captors with all his power.

Joe Phenix waited until the driver was compelled to pause from want of breath, and then he said:

"Can you curse yourself free, hey?"

This direct question checked MacFad's rage and set him to reflecting upon the situation.

"Oh, I reckon you have got me in a fix, and there isn't much chance for me to get out until you choose to let me go," he admitted.

"What use to fool away da time in cursing, then?" the supposed Italian asked.

"You tella me what I want to know, and then you can go."

"Oh, no, I ain't no sich kind of a feller!" Patsey declared.

"You have got me here all right, and I will own up that you worked the trick about as well as anything of the kind that I ever heard of, but there's an old saying which, I think, will fit in here furst rate, and that is, though it only takes one man to lead a horse to water, a hundred can't make him drink if he ain't inclined that way, see?" and the fellow leered insolently in the faces of his captors.

"Ahal you think you are like da boss, eh?" Joe Phenix queried.

"Yes, I think that is about the size of it!" MacFad exclaimed, defiantly.

"Do you think we are a couple of fools to go to the trouble of catching you, and then not know how to make you talk, hey?" the captor exclaimed.

MacFad puzzled over this problem for a moment.

"Well, I dunno," he replied, slowly. "It may be that you are a heap sight smarter than I take you to be, but I kin jest tell you dat if you think you kin make me talk when I have said dat I wasn't a-going to do it, den youse have made the biggest kind of a mistake, see?"

And as he closed the sentence the fellow brought his heavy jaws together with a decided snap.

"We did not bring you here to fool with you, or to have you fool us!" the supposed Italian announced. "You no talk we makea you!"

"The blazes, you will!" the ruffian cried.

"Yes, that is what we will do alla right!"

"Go ahead, and try it on!" MacFad exclaimed, defiantly.

"You have played a skin-game on me by roping me into this 'ere thing, but you can't play me for no sucker, all the same!"

"You willa not talk?"

"Not much!"

"Bring it out!"

It was a brief command, and the cab-driver looked with considerable curiosity to see what "it" was.

There was some rubbish, old boxes and barrels, at the further end of the cellar; from behind the pile Tony Western brought a small furnace, such as traveling tinkers carry with them to heat their irons.

And in the furnace were a couple of soldering-irons, thrust in among the glowing coals.

MacFad looked askance at the furnace, and then in a suspicious way at the Italians.

Tony Western set the furnace down within a yard of the cabman's feet, and then Joe Phenix approached, took one of the irons out of the fire and examined it with a professional air. After a careful inspection, he spit upon the red-hot point and grinned at the sound of the water being quenched by the red-hot iron.

"It is vera good—it willa do," he remarked.

"Get him ready!"

Tony Western approached the chair and touched a lever on the side which elevated the foot-rest, so that MacFad's feet stuck out after the fashion of a man in a barber's-chair.

Then Western laid his hand upon the driver's shoe.

"You misereble bounds! W'ot are you about? W'ot are you going to do?" MacFad exclaimed, very much excited.

"He will take your shoes off so I can toast your feet with this iron, you see, hey?" Joe Phenix replied with a grin.

"You miserable dogs! I will kill the both of you!" the cabman exclaimed, wild with rage and making the most desperate efforts to free himself from the bonds which held him fast.

He struggled and raved until he fairly frothed at the mouth.

Vain were his efforts.

It would have required the strength of a second Samson to burst the stout steel bands which held MacFad so tightly, but although the driver was possessed of about as much strength as is allotted to the average man, yet he was very far from being a Samson, and, in fact, in a fight he would not have stood any chance with either of the men who had so cunningly inspired him.

Neither of the supposed Italians said anything, or made a movement, until MacFad became quiet, utterly exhausted by his efforts.

Then Joe Phenix replaced the iron in the furnace and drew out the other one.

"Come, you must hurry!" he exclaimed. "Off with the shoes!"

"I will kill both of you when I get out of this!" MacFad cried, now so hoarse that he could hardly speak.

"Bahl save you breath to cool you soup!" Joe Phenix replied, defiantly.

"Do you think that we have taken all the trouble to get you into this trap and then that we can be frightened by a few big words?"

"Do you take us for childer?" the false Italian cried. "And when you talk about killing, do you think we hav'n't got knives, and don't know how to use them? Bahl we would think no more of cutting your throat than of eating an onion."

"But we do not killa without good reason, or fer good money."

"We wanta to know about der man in der cab, and if you do not tell us, we will toast the soles of your feet so that you will not want to walk upon them for some time."

"Off with his shoes so I can give this Irishman a taste of the hot iron."

Tony Western made another motion to remove the shoes, but MacFad cried out:

"Hold on! Don't be in such a blamed hurry! Give a man a chance to think the matter over, won't you?"

"Oh, yes, that is alla right," the disguised detective replied. "You can have alla time you want; yes, plenty of time. We no want to hurry you; we will give you five minutes to make up your mind."

"Five minutes!" exclaimed the ruffian in deep disgust. "Do you call that plenty of time?"

"How much you wanta hey?" responded the false Italian, sharply.

"What do you take us for? You thinka we have nothing to do but to stay here with you?"

"Diavolo! if you were dealing with some of mine friends in Italy, who are brigands in the mountains, they would not accorda you a moment's delay. Oh, no! they would try the hot irons first, and give you time to think the matter over afterwards."

This announcement made the driver fearfully enraged.

"You blamed Dago!" he exclaimed, angrily.

"You have got me in a bad hole this time, but you kin bet your sweet life that the day will come when I will git square with you for this 'ere trick."

"Oh, yes, it is our turn now, next time it will be yours; so goes the world," the supposed Italian remarked with the air of a philosopher.

"But that does not trouble us in the least. To-day is what we will look after, and we will let to-morrow take care of itself, so tella us what we wanta to know, and talka no more with your mouth."

MacFad saw that he was in a tight place, as the saying is, for he had seen enough of the Dagoes, as he contemptuously termed them, to understand that they were ugly customers to deal with when their blood was up, and he did

not have a doubt that they would use the irons on him if he refused to do as they requested.

The idea that they were not Italians, but only masquerading as Dagos never entered his head.

"Well, I ain't the kind of a man to squeal on a feller who pays me a good price to do a job," he remarked in a sullen tone. "And I wouldn't give this thing away if you hadn't managed to git me in this 'ere fix, but as I am in a bad hole I have got to git out of it some way."

"Oh, yes, and the easiest way is the best way," the disguised detective remarked.

"But I want youse to understand that I will git hunk with youse for this trick the first chance I git!" MacFad announced.

"Oh, yes, we know all 'bout that," the captor remarked with an air which plainly showed he was not at all affected by the threat.

"You badda mans," the Italian continued with a grin. "When you getta your mad up you like to kill, eh? Oh, yes, but we are not afraid. You do what we want now, and getta square some other time."

MacFad was no fool, and though he would have dearly liked to bluster a bit by giving utterance to fearful threats of what he would do when he got a good chance at his captors, yet, under the circumstances, he came to the conclusion that it would not do him any good to indulge in boasts, for it was evident that the men who had captured him were old hands at the business, and they would be much more inclined to laugh at his words than to pay any serious attention to them.

It was a mystery to him why the Italians should concern themselves about the matter, for he could not understand their being at all interested.

He did not indulge in much speculation in regard to this though, for he was an extremely dull-witted fellow, and when he encountered a puzzle of this sort, he seldom attempted to solve it.

"It goes ag'in' my grain to squeal on a man who has paid me a good price," MacFad observed in a regretful way. "But as I am in a hole, and don't see any way to git out of the scrape I shall have to do it."

"Yes, yes, a mans would be a fool not to do it," the captor remarked.

Then the driver proceeded to make a clean breast of it.

At first, in his anger at being so cunningly entrapped, MacFad made up his mind to fool the Italians by not telling them the truth about the matter, but then when he found that they meant business, and were not disposed to stand any nonsense the thought came to him that it might not be wise to try any game of the kind.

He was not sure in regard to their knowledge of the matter, and it might be possible they possessed such information as would enable them to detect that he was deceiving them if he attempted to play any trick of the kind, and from the taste that he already had of their quality he was apprehensive they would be apt to handle him pretty roughly if they detected that he was attempting to deceive them.

The toughs of New York—the class to which the cab-driver belonged—have a contemptuous hatred for the Dagos, as they term the Italians, but for all that they affect to despise them, yet they seldom care to pick a quarrel with the olive-skinned sons of Italy, unless all the advantage is on their side, for the Italians are quick to resent an injury, and when they become involved in a quarrel almost invariably use a knife as a weapon, never relying upon their fists.

And it is a curious fact, too, well known to the police, and to the criminal court judges of New York, that when Italians get into a fight among themselves, and some of them receive serious wounds, it is almost an impossibility to induce the wounded men to reveal the name of their assailants.

The men who have been injured, and all the witnesses of the affray, are suddenly afflicted with the most wonderful loss of memory, for all of them unite in declaring that they really know nothing about the affair, and although at other times they are able to understand, and make themselves understood in English very well, yet on these occasions, when the authorities try to get at the facts of the case, all the witnesses usually declare they know so little of the English tongue, that they do not comprehend the questions which are put to them, nor are they able to make themselves understood.

MacFad knew enough about the Italians to comprehend that some of them were desperate men when they became aroused, and from the boldness of the game which the pair had played in capturing him he got the idea that he had fallen into the hands of a couple of transported bandits who would not hesitate to inflict some fiendish kind of torture upon him if he attempted to play a trick upon them.

So the driver made a virtue of necessity and told the truth.

His story was a simple one.

A stranger had sought him out, and engaged him to be at a certain spot at a specified time, explaining that he, the stranger, would probably have a drunken friend with him whom he wanted to carry home.

He was on hand, the stranger with the drunken friend made his appearance, and he had carried them to a lonely house on the outskirts of Fordham.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A BARGAIN.

THE moment the story was told Joe Phenix saw there was no time to be lost, and so he said, to the driver:

"What do you charge to take us to the old house, hey?"

"Oh, do you want to go up there?" the driver asked, surprised by the question.

"Yes, yes, the man is a friend of ours—he is in trouble, and we must get him out alla right," the false Italian answered.

"A little hocus business—a job put up on him?" MacFad queried.

"Yes; and we will not letta him stay there," the other declared.

"I will give you my word, old man, that I did not know anything about it," the driver asserted.

"The job came to me in the regular way of trade, and I am one of the kind of men who mind my own business: a fellow, you understand, who don't ask any impudent questions when a customer wants me to do something a little out of the usual line."

"I never trouble my head about the thing so long as it appears to be all right," MacFad continued.

"Of course I ain't the kind of man to go and run my head into no hole. If a bloke was to come to me, and wanted me to go into any crooked business, I wouldn't have it for a cent, for I wouldn't risk being jugged for no man; but as far as I could see this was all right and straight, 'cos I couldn't tell that the man had been dozed."

The driver tried his best to put on an appearance of frank honesty during the delivery of this explanation, but the acute detective was not at all deceived, for he knew what kind of a reputation the cab-driver bore.

No doubt he would hesitate to go into any crooked job if he thought there was much risk of being caught, but if the rascals who needed his assistance were willing to pay a big price, and he thought the chance of detection was small, the man would not hesitate to go in with the crooks.

But Joe Phenix was too crafty to allow the cab-driver to suspect that he doubted his honesty.

All that he wanted was to be conveyed to the place of confinement of his spy, so as to be able to accomplish a rescue.

"Yes, yes, that is all right," the veteran detective responded.

"How much you charge, eh?"

"It is worth ten dollars, and I wouldn't take you for a cent less!" MacFad declared, in a dogged way.

"It is too much money, but I suppose I will have to give you it," the disguised detective responded.

"You jst bet you will, and it is cheap, too, for it is a fearful ways out there."

"Alla right! we will go right away. Let him a-go!" the false Italian commanded.

Tony Western went to the back of the chair, touched a concealed spring which was there, setting the machinery in motion, and the manacles disappeared as suddenly as they had appeared.

The cab-driver sprang to his feet with a sigh of relief, stretched out his arms as though they felt stiff from the confinement, and then turning around, surveyed the chair with an expression of great curiosity.

"I will be hanged if this don't beat all the things that I ever run across in my time!" he declared.

"I say, what kind of a lay are you two fellows on, anyway, for to have a piece of furniture like this in the house?" he asked. "Some little crooked business, I will bet money."

"Neva you mind—it is alla right!" the disguised detective replied.

"Oh, yes, I know that it isn't any of my business but I would like to know, all the same. You blamed Dagos are up to all sorts of tricks, and I s'pose this is one of 'em!" the cab-driver declared. "It is crooked, of course, for you couldn't use any sich trick as this in an honest way."

"Neva mind," the false Italian responded, shortly. "Come along and take us to our friend."

"Go ahead! I'm your man!"

Tony Western took the lantern and advanced to the stairs.

"Go you with 'im, and I will come along," Joe Phenix commanded.

Up the stairs the three went, but just as he reached the top Tony Western stumbled, and at the same moment put the lantern out, just as though it had been extinguished by accident.

"Hello! what you about?" the disguised detective exclaimed. "You want to break your neck, eh?"

"No matches!" responded Tony Western giving the true Dago intonation to the words, and pretending to fumble in his pockets as he spoke.

"No matter! go on!" Joe Phenix commanded, pretending to be impatient.

"You know the way—speak when you come to a turn."

This extinguishing of the lantern was an ingenious move to prevent MacFad from perceiving how access was had to the lower cellar, for the veteran detective wished to keep the existence of that apartment a secret.

So the three groped their way through the dark until they reached the basement door, through which they passed to the street.

The cab was standing in front of the house just as the driver had left it, and MacFad drew a long breath as he looked around.

"Blamed if I ain't glad to git into the open air ag'in!" he cried. "I feel kinder shivery, jest as if I had been a wrestling with a nightmare, and I must say that you two blamed Dagos put up on me the worst kind of a job that I ever struck! I really think, too, I ought to do my best to git square with you in some way," and the cab-driver doubled up his fist and shook it in a menacing way at the supposed Italian.

For answer, Joe Phenix whipped out a glittering knife, with a blade fully ten inches long.

"What you tink of that, eh?" he asked as he flashed the bright steel before the eyes of the other. "For two cents I will cut-a-you your heart out!"

MacFad was no coward, but the sight of the glittering knife startled him, for he knew enough about the Dagos to understand that they were ready to use a dagger on almost the slightest provocation.

"Hold on!" the driver cried in alarm. "Don't be in a hurry! I was only joking. I don't bear any malice, and I am willing to show you where your pal is."

"It is good!" the false Italian responded, returning the knife to its hiding-place. "Go on, and wasta no more time."

"Say, you are as fiery as a peppered!" MacFad declared. "Blame me if I ever run across sich a bloke as you are afore."

"Go on! Make haste to get your ten dollars!" the disgruntled detective remarked.

"Oh, yes, I am eager enough to grab that!" the driver declared.

"Hop in, and I will drive you there as fast as the beast can go."

"It is a mighty long way, though, out beyond Harlem—a good three miles from the bridge, I should say."

"The more reason, then, that we start as soon as we can," the false Italian responded.

Then into the cab the two got, MacFad mounted to the box and started the horse, who went off at a good gait.

"I will collar twenty chucks to-night!" MacFad exclaimed. "A tidy night's work!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE RESCUE.

ALTHOUGH the driver had felt extremely sore on account of being handled so roughly, yet as he drove on his way, and reflected upon the money which he was to receive, he came to the conclusion that it was a very fortunate thing for him that the Dagos had taken it into their heads to lead him into a trap.

"Yes, yes, it was a good thing," he muttered, as he chirruped to his horse to increase his speed. "And if they hadn't put up such a job on me the odds are big that I would have been just fool enough not to give the snap away, 'cos that is the kind of man I am."

"It would have seemed to me like reaching on a jal, and I wouldn't have done and so have missed the chance to collar this ere little tenner."

Then a thought came to the driver which caused him to scowl a bit.

"Mebbe arter I put the blokes on the ground they may not be willing to put up the ten," he murmured. "It would be jest like these blamed Dagos to try a game of that kind."

For a good twenty minutes the driver meditated over this matter and the more he thought about it the greater became his anxiety.

By this time the cab had passed over Harlem bridge and got well into the lonely bit of country at the extreme end of which the old house was situated.

"What a big donkey I was to come out without my 'gun'!" MacFad muttered.

"To-night, jest because I needed it, I had to go and forget the blamed thing," he continued in an angry tone.

"If I had the gun, these cursed Dagos wouldn't be able to skeer me with their knives, but as it is I am right under their thumb and I don't dare to make no kick."

MacFad racked his brains to find some way by which he could get the money out of the men before driving them to the house, but in spite of all his endeavors he could not hit upon a plan.

He did not dare to threaten that if he did not get the money in advance he would not take them to the house for he had a wholesome fear

of the big knife which the Italian had displayed. So the driver was in anything but a pleasant state of mind when he drew up in front of the house.

The two disguised detectives were on the alert and sprung out of the cab the moment it halted.

During the ride Joe Phenix had formed a plan of action and proceeded immediately to carry it out.

In his judgment the time for throwing aside his disguise had come.

So the moment the two were on the ground Tony Western hurried to the head of the horse, took hold of the bridle with one hand, while with the other he leveled a six-shooter at the astonished cab-driver.

"Hold on! what are you 'bout?" MacFad cried in amazement.

"You are my prisoner—don't attempt to make a move to escape or I will put a bullet in you!" Tony Western cried.

There was no trace of the Italian accent in his voice now, and never was there a more surprised man than the cab-driver.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed. "What are you up to? What kind of a game is this, anyway?"

"You are in the hands of the law—that is what it means," Tony Western replied.

"You are an accomplice in the drugging and in the abduction of the young man whom you drove out here, and we mean to hold onto you until you reveal the name of the fellow who arranged the game."

MacFad was now more astonished than ever, and in a dreadful state of alarm also, for there was something in the stern tones of the detective which struck terror to his heart.

"I give you my word of honor, gents, that I don't know any more 'bout this here thing than what I have told you," the cab-driver protested. "I give it to you in the beginning as straight as a string!"

"Mebbe you think there was some crooks mixed up in the business, but you are away off," MacFad continued.

"There was only one man in the thing—slender, boyish-looking chap, and that is the reason why I didn't think there was anything in the thing. I didn't understand, of course, why he should bring his friend, as he called him, out to this 'ere lonely place; but then these young fellows take queer notions into their heads sometimes, and I thought mebbe he was up to some lark. But I give my word, gents—yes, I am ready to swear to it on a stack of Bibles—that this young chap is no regular crook."

"If he has been up to any game he has gone into it as an amateur."

Both of the detectives had been pretty well satisfied that the driver had told the truth when he gave, in the cellar, an account of how he came to be mixed up in the affair, but in their consultation they had come to the conclusion that it would not do any hurt to make an attempt to get a different story out of him.

During this conversation Joe Phenix had been busy at the lock of the door.

It was one of the common, old-fashioned kind, and as the veteran detective had taken the precaution to provide himself with some skeleton keys, he had no difficulty in getting into the house, for the lock was easily picked.

Joe Phenix had a dark-lantern in his pocket, for he anticipated that it might prove useful, and so after he gained an entrance to the house, by its aid he speedily found his way to the place where the disguised spy was concealed.

Mignon—or Hector, to call the actress-detective by her assumed name, for as long as she is masquerading in boy's clothes it simplifies matters so to do—was delighted to see the veteran detective, and uttered a cry of joy when he made his appearance.

"Well, well, this is a pretty pickle for you to be in!" Joe Phenix exclaimed.

"Yes, there isn't any doubt about that," the spy admitted. "And I must own up to the fact that the man was a good deal smarter than I took him to be."

"Yes, he is an uncommonly shrewd rascal—in fact a regular genius in that line, and we are going to have trouble in getting into such a position as to be able to hold him hard and fast," Joe Phenix remarked, as he proceeded to release the spy.

The actress-detective rose to her feet with a sigh of relief and stretched out her arms, which were cramped from remaining so long in one position.

"Ah! what a pleasure it is to get the free use of my limbs again!" she exclaimed.

"How was it that the fellow managed to entrap you, and what possessed him to play such a game?" Joe Phenix asked, for he was puzzled by the strange move.

"I will relate the particulars of the affair, and then you can form your own conclusions," the spy replied, and then told the story of the entrapping from the beginning.

"I came to the opinion, at the very beginning of this matter, that the man was a remarkably shrewd and daring fellow, and this affair proves that I was correct in my estimate of him," Joe Phenix observed.

"He was cunning enough to detect that spies were on his track, and although I tried to arrange the game so that it would be an extremely difficult matter for him to arrive at a conclusion of that kind, yet he was smart enough to do it," the veteran detective continued.

"I will not attempt to conceal from you that I had an idea that he might be shrewd enough to suspect you had come to the house for the express purpose of playing the spy upon him, and I thought it was likely that if he did arrive at any such conclusion he might attempt to make an attack on you, and so, without saying anything to you about the matter, I arranged a complete shadow guard for the express purpose of keeping a close watch if you and he went abroad in company."

"Well, it was my impression that you would not be caught napping, although I was," the spy remarked. "And so I did not worry much over my imprisonment, for I had confidence that you would come to my aid."

"Your confidence was based upon reason," the veteran detective replied. "For as I was using you as a bait to attract the fellow into a trap, it was certain that I would not fail to keep a close watch upon both you and him."

"Your suspicion that he is the man who committed the murders is correct undoubtedly, for unless he was concerned in the crime he would not have taken the trouble to arrange this trap," the spy argued.

"Oh, he is the man, and if we act promptly we may be able to catch him."

"I suppose you will arrest him at once," the actress-detective remarked in a thoughtful way.

"Yes, for I can hold him on this assault charge, and a prompt search of his rooms and person may bring to light some evidence which will serve to connect him with the murders," Joe Phenix explained.

"Yes, it really looks as if we might be able to catch him unawares," the spy assented.

"That is our game, and if we can only carry it out I think we will be able to accomplish something."

The pair then left the cellar and made their way to the open air.

Tony Western was still keeping guard over the cabman, much to the disgust of that individual.

"We could make this a pretty bad business for you if we chose to have you hauled up," the veteran detective remarked, sternly.

There was a certain something in Joe Phenix's voice which satisfied MacFad that he was a man who would be apt to be as good as his word, and so the driver, in great alarm, at once proceeded to explain that he was "just as innocent as a baby" of any wrong-doing.

Perceiving that MacFad was thoroughly frightened the detective cross-examined him in regard to the young man who had hired him to do the job.

But the cab-driver stuck persistently to the story which he had first told.

The man was a stranger, and he knew nothing whatever about him.

All he could say was that he came along, made a bargain for the use of the cab, and paid the money promptly.

"We will have to hunt him up in New York," Joe Phenix remarked.

Then the three entered the cab and away they went for the city.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SPRINGING THE TRAP.

JOE PHENIX had told the driver to let them out at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, and during the passage thither he arranged a plan of action.

"The fellow is certain that you are a police spy," the veteran detective observed. "And although he could not get a confession out of you, yet he doubtless calculates that in time he will be able to do so."

"I presume he thinks that after I have spent a night in the cellar, and begin to experience the pangs of hunger and thirst, I will be inclined to make a clean breast of it," the actress-detective remarked.

"Yes, it is probable that he has figured the thing out in that way," Joe Phenix assented.

"He has calculated that it is not likely your absence will be discovered until to-morrow—possibly not until late, which would give him time to force a confession out of you and to allow him to escape, if he thinks it is wise to seek safety in flight," the veteran detective continued.

"But like the majority of these shrewd rascals he has overreached himself," the actress-detective observed.

"If he had been content to keep on in the even tenor of his way without attempting to do anything, the chances are great that it would have been a difficult matter to get at him."

"Yes, that is correct," Joe Phenix remarked. "But the record of all great criminal cases shows that it is not possible for the rascals to keep still. They cannot bring themselves to do it, and so they are apt to make false moves which gives the bloodhounds of the law a chance at them."

"It is so in this case," the veteran detective continued. "By attacking you the man has ex-

posed himself, and I think the chances are good that we will not only be able to arrest the fellow, but also to find such evidence as will lead to his conviction."

Then Joe Phenix explained what he proposed to do.

At the Fifth Avenue Hotel they would leave the cab and take a coach, which would accommodate four, then proceed to the house of one of the city police justices and get a warrant for Lemaire's arrest.

Armed with this they would visit the lodging-house and seize the man.

"We will probably have trouble in getting a warrant at this late hour, but as some of the justices and their clerks are late birds I think we can manage the matter," Joe Phenix explained.

Notwithstanding the lateness of the hour the veteran detective succeeded in getting his warrant, thanks to the knowledge he had of the habits of the men whom he sought.

Then the three were driven to the lodging-house.

As they alighted from the hack, a seedy-looking fellow, who seemed like a tramp came along.

"The man had been curled up in a doorway, apparently enjoying a nap."

But the fellow was no tramp, only one of the shadows whom the veteran detective had employed.

"Any news?" Joe Phenix asked.

"Nothing in particular."

"What time did the man come back?"

"About eleven o'clock," the shadow answered.

"And from the way he acted I have an idea that he thought he was watched."

"He seemed to be on the look-out, eh?"

"Yes; he did not go right into the house, but kept on up the block as though he suspected that he was followed, and wanted to catch the spy by doubling abruptly on his tracks."

"But the trick did not succeed."

"No, for I was across the way, in a dark corner, and didn't stir."

"Then he came back and went into the house?" Joe Phenix questioned.

"Yes, but he stopped in the front of the house for a good five minutes, and looked up and down the street as though he expected to catch somebody in the act of shadowing him."

"But he did not do it," Joe Phenix remarked.

"No, and then he went into the house. I kept my eyes on his window, saw him light the gas, then he closed the blinds, and after ten minutes or so put the gas out."

"That was done to convey the idea to any one who might be watching him that he had gone to bed," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Yes, that was the conclusion to which I came," the spy assented.

"I do not like the idea of the blinds being closed," the veteran detective observed in a reflective way.

"It appears to me as if that was an extremely suspicious move," he continued. "If he had merely wished to escape observation while he prepared for bed he would have contented himself with drawing the curtains down, and not gone to the trouble of closing the blinds, but I fancy the reason why he did that was so that he could keep a watch on the street without being observed."

"I thought of that, and so I did not move from my dark corner for a long time, and then I went for three fellows who stopped right in front of me to light their cigars. I boned them for a stake for a bed in the regular bum style, and when they wouldn't have it, and moved off down the street to Broadway, I kept at their heels until they got angry and threatened to call a policeman, then I passed them and got on the other side of the street, as though I was afraid they might come after me."

"You worked the game well, but I am afraid our man has caught onto it, for I have an idea that he is an extraordinary smart rascal," Joe Phenix remarked.

"The blind business is a very suspicious circumstance, and I am fearful that we will not be able to nab our man," he continued.

"Well, I don't see why you shouldn't," the spy replied. "He is in the house, all right, for I have been on the watch ever since he went in, and I am sure he hasn't come out."

"It is a point which can soon be settled," said Phenix. "But my idea is that we will not get him. There are more ways than one to get out of a house—more exits than by the front door. I think the chances are great that he has been on the watch, and if that be true, the moment we got out of the coach he knew it was time for him to be off and has undoubtedly skipped."

"We will soon discover the truth though."

Then Joe Phenix led the way into the house, followed by Tony Western and the actress-detective, the shadow remaining without on the watch.

As the detective was provided with a latch-key he had no trouble in obtaining admission into the house, and the three at once made their way to the room occupied by Lemaire.

The hall was lighted by a coal-oil lamp, which burned all night long for the accommodation of the lodgers, so the party had plenty of light for their investigation.

The key was in the inside of the lock and Joe Phenix called the attention of the others to this fact.

"This would seem to indicate that the man is in his room, and we may be able to nab him after all," the veteran detective remarked.

"It may be possible that I have given the fellow credit for more smartness than he really possesses," he continued. "And I shall be greatly pleased to discover that my judgment is at fault."

Then the detective knocked at the door.

There was no answer, so he rapped again, and this time a little louder.

No response was made, therefore Joe Phenix turned the knob and the door opened.

It was not locked.

The lamp in the entry was so placed that when the door was open the light illuminated the room so the intruders were enabled to have a good view of the interior.

It was a medium-sized, plainly furnished apartment.

No one was within, and the bed showed that it had not been occupied.

"My suspicion was correct," Joe Phenix remarked. "The bird has taken the alarm and sought safety in flight."

"I had an idea that he was an extra sharp hand, and it is evident that I was not out of the way in my guess."

"But now let us see if we can find anything to show that this fellow has been up to any crooked work."

An exhaustive search the three made but without making any discoveries.

All there was in the room that belonged to Lemaire was a small valise which contained a few articles of clothing.

"The man didn't have time to take any of his possessions with him," Tony Western remarked. "And, judging from what we find here, he didn't invest much money in clothes."

"This room is but a blind," Joe Phenix declared. "This is not his real headquarters. He had apartments elsewhere, and we must at once put the police on the scent; by acting promptly we may be able to trap him."

"First, though, we will investigate his escape. It will be a little satisfaction to discover how the man contrived to give us the slip," the detective added, with a grim smile.

"I think that it was as you suspected," Tony Western remarked. "He closed the blinds so as to be able to keep a watch without being detected, and then when he saw us get out of the coach he scented danger, and skipped as fast as possible."

"You have undoubtedly stated the case correctly, and now let us see how the fellow contrived to work the trick," Joe Phenix remarked.

"He could not have got away over the roofs, for they are sloping ones and he would have stood a good chance of breaking his neck if he had tried any game of that kind," Tony Western observed.

"The chances are that he went out through the back door into the yard and then scaled the fences, but how he managed to get to the street is a mystery," Joe Phenix declared.

But when the three reached the yard it did not take them long to discover how the fugitive made his escape.

The back door was neither locked nor bolted, so it seemed probable that Lemaire had made his exit in that way.

The house on the next cross street, the yard of which was separated from the yard of the lodging-house by a six-foot fence, which could be easily scaled, was undergoing repairs and uninhabited, so it was an easy matter for any one to scale the fence and then pass through the house into the street.

"It is easy enough now to see how the man contrived to give us the slip," Joe Phenix remarked as the three stood in the yard and gazed at the half-destroyed house.

"Yes, it is evident that he is an uncommonly sharp rogue, and we are going to be put to our trumps to catch him," Tony Western observed.

"He hasn't got much the start of us and if we put the police machinery in motion promptly we may be able to catch him if he attempts to leave the city," Joe Phenix remarked.

"We had better go to Police Headquarters at once then," Tony Western suggested.

"Yes, there isn't any time to be lost," Joe Phenix coincided.

"The bird is on the wing and there is little doubt that he will do his level best to get away; but he will have to be a wonderfully smart fellow if he succeeds in beating the telegraph," the veteran detective remarked.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE PURSUIT.

The three hurried to the coach and were driven in haste to Police Headquarters.

In a big city like New York the official eye of the police never sleeps, and there are always men on duty at all hours.

Joe Phenix was well known to the officials,

and when he explained what he desired the police telegraph was at once brought into play.

Instructions were sent to every police captain in the city to instruct his men to be on the watch for Lemaire, and to arrest him as soon as he was discovered.

A full description of the man was given and the police warned that he was a most important criminal.

Then the three departed.

As they descended to the street, Joe Phenix, who had been reflecting deeply upon the matter, said, abruptly:

"This is all right as far as it goes—if the man attempts to leave the city he will be nabbed, unless he assumes a disguise, and then the chances are that he will succeed in getting off, but it is my impression that he will not attempt to run away."

"He has succeeded in throwing us completely off the track, and if he is at all cunning in assuming a disguise there isn't a spot in the world where he can find better hiding-places than right here in New York."

"Oh, yes, there isn't a doubt about that!" the actress-detective asserted. "Either a man or woman can lose themselves better in a large city than anywhere else."

By this time the three had reached the front door and they halted in the entry to converse.

"The man fled because we had succeeded in getting upon his track," Joe Phenix remarked.

"He either had to fly, or run the risk of being captured, but now that he has thrown us off, and the danger of capture is past, I think it is certain that he will return to his original idea."

"To the three men who composed the Colorado Syndicate he bore a deadly hatred; two of them he has succeeded in killing, and I think it is certain, as he has succeeded in evading pursuit, that he will begin to plan to compass the general's death."

The others reflected for a moment upon the situation and then they both expressed their belief that Joe Phenix had the correct idea about the matter.

"Now then, it is our game to lure the fellow on to attack the general," the wily detective suggested.

"And in order to carry out the plan successfully we must give the general the idea that I consider all danger of an attack to be over and the guards can be withdrawn, but, in reality, I will double the number of the watchers, and have them all assume such cunning disguises that it will be a wonderfully shrewd man indeed who is able to detect that they are not what they appear."

"It is probable, I think, that for a week or two the man will not attempt to do anything," the detective continued.

"He will remain quiet, so as to allow time for the thing to blow over, and then he will strive to strike the general a deadly blow, and if we are on the alert we may succeed in catching him."

The others expressed their belief that this was probable.

"Now the next thing is to arrange so as to surround the general's person with a cordon of spies without his knowledge," Joe Phenix remarked in a thoughtful way.

"That will be a difficult matter, for as the general keeps bachelor's hall he does not have many servants," Tony Western observed.

"I think I can arrange the affair through the janitor, who has charge of the building where the general has his quarters," the veteran detective replied.

"I am well acquainted with the man as it happens, fortunately, and had it in my power to do him a service a year or so ago, and there is little doubt but what I can count on his assistance."

"Well, well, that is lucky!" Tony Western exclaimed.

"Lucky things of that kind are happening all the time," the actress-detective observed, with the air of a philosopher.

"The janitor is a shrewd and careful fellow too, and one whom I can depend upon," Joe Phenix said. "In the morning I will see him and I do not doubt but what I can succeed in making all the necessary arrangements."

"Now I will have the coach carry you, Western, back to the general's, and also return you to your home," and he nodded to the actress-detective.

The others bowed assent.

"Meet me at my office to-morrow at twelve o'clock," Joe Phenix said. "By that time I shall, probably, have matters arranged so as to be able to lay out the programme of our future operations."

The pair said they would not fail to be on hand; then the three got into the coach, and in due time Western was left at the general's house, the actress-detective deposited at hers, then the veteran detective was driven to his abode.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HOT ON THE TRAIL.

JOE PHENIX was one of the kind of men who did not believe in allowing the grass to grow be-

neath his feet, as the saying is, so at eight o'clock on the following morning he called upon the general.

Purvis and Western were just sitting down to breakfast when the detective came.

"Aha, you are just in time!" the general exclaimed. "Sit down and join us!"

"Much obliged, but I have breakfasted," the veteran detective replied. "I don't mind taking a cup of coffee, though, and I can explain my business as I go on."

"All right! go ahead!" the general replied.

And then Joe Phenix told his story, much to the amazement of the capitalist.

"Great Heavens! I am completely astounded!" Purvis declared, when the recital was ended.

"The idea of that young man turning out to be such a rascal. But now that you have made the discovery, I can recall several suspicious circumstances."

"Yes, that is usually the case," the detective observed.

"Trifles which did not seem to amount to anything at the time become important matters when a man finally gets his eyes open."

"Yes, yes, how extremely true that is!" the general exclaimed.

"It was no wonder that the fellow was able to arrange his plans so skillfully, being right in our office, and therefore possessing a perfect knowledge of our movements."

"But, my dear Mr. Phenix, the man must be a moral monster or else he never would have embarked in such an enterprise," the general continued, with a great deal of warmth.

"How was it that the man came to be in your employment—can you recall the particulars?" Joe Phenix asked.

"Oh, yes; he first came to our office about a year ago, used to pay visits to our clerk, a middle-aged Englishman whom we then employed, and this clerk said the young man was a medical student, but had an idea of giving up his studies, as the life did not seem to agree with him."

"That corresponds with what I learned concerning him," the veteran detective remarked.

"And in order to get a good knowledge of actual business life, he made an arrangement with our clerk to receive instructions from him, and our man asked if there would be any objection to the young man's coming to the office every now and then, for the purpose of assisting him in the discharge of his duties."

"Naturally we said we did not object to the arrangement, for, practically, it gave us the services of another man without our having to pay for him," and the general chuckled as though he considered that this was a particularly sharp business operation.

"Yes, the arrangement was not an unprofitable one for you," the veteran detective remarked.

"In that way he got to be a frequent visitor, and as he seemed to be a quiet, studious fellow, very anxious to acquire a knowledge of commercial life, we took quite an interest in him."

"That was natural, under the circumstances," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Then our clerk began to be a little unsteady in his habits—took to drinking, and we received several anonymous communications, warning us that we had better keep our eyes upon him, as he had taken to 'playing the races,' and indulging in other forms of gambling."

"The letters, of course, came from the studious young man who was paying your clerk to give him a knowledge of actual business," the veteran detective observed, with a quiet smile.

"Well, at the time I did not have any suspicion that it was so, but now that you have managed to turn a sort of a calcium light upon Lemaire's actions, I can plainly see that he must have been the man who wrote the warning letters," the general remarked, with a weighty shake of the head.

"Oh, yes, no doubt about it!" Joe Phenix declared. "It was a well-devised and skillfully carried out scheme on his part to gain admittance to your office. The chances are a thousand to one that it was he who led the clerk astray, and it was done for the purpose of securing his place."

"I should not be surprised," the general admitted. "But although I think that I am as smart and as far-sighted as the average man yet I did not smell out this conspiracy until now."

"There is no doubt in my mind that Lemaire led your clerk to ruin for the express purpose of getting his place," the veteran detective remarked.

"Yes, yes, it certainly looks like it, but at the time I did not have any idea that aught was wrong," the general declared.

"I could see, of course, that Featherstone—John Featherstone was the name of our clerk—was not attending to his business as diligently as he should, and I had occasion to reprimand him two or three times, and at last I gave him warning that if he did not turn over a new leaf I would have to discharge him."

"He pleaded sickness, and promised to do better, but as after that time I kept a close watch upon him I soon saw that he was not keeping

his promise, and that the greater part of his work was being done by Lemaire," the general continued.

"By this time, you understand, Lemaire had become so familiar with our ways, and the work which had to be done, that he could attend to it just about as well as Featherstone."

"Yes, it was his game to arrange the matter in that way so that when you decided to discharge Featherstone he would be able to step into the position," Joe Phenix observed.

"Oh, yes, I can see that now, but at the time, as I told you, I had no idea that Lemaire was the kind of man to arrange and carry out a plot of that kind."

"Well, one day upon coming to the office we found Featherstone there helplessly drunk upon the sofa, while Lemaire was doing his work, and the young man attempted to screen Featherstone, as we thought, by saying that he had been taken suddenly ill and had been obliged to take brandy, and as he wasn't used to liquor it had gone to his head."

"And that, of course, gave you a good impression of Lemaire," the veteran detective remarked with a smile.

"Certainly, for none of us had a suspicion that it was all part of a deep-laid scheme," the general replied.

"We told Lemaire to get a coach and take Featherstone home, and as we had some important work which needed to be done that day, we made arrangements for Lemaire to attend to it."

"Featherstone did not come near the office for a week," the general continued. "And we heard through some acquaintances of his that he was on the biggest kind of a spree."

"When he made his appearance at last, his condition plainly showed just how he had been passing his time away, and we did not lose the opportunity of giving him his walking-papers."

"And I presume that Lemaire immediately applied for the position?" Joe Phenix suggested.

"Yes, he brought us a fine recommendation from the head doctor of the hospital where he had been pursuing his medical studies, and as we thought we knew pretty well just what kind of a young man he was, we gave him the position without any hesitation."

"Can you recall the name of the hospital and of the doctor who gave the recommendation?"

"Certainly; Bellevue, Doctor James Johnson."

"And he had a written recommendation from Doctor Johnson?" Joe Phenix asked, taking out his note-book and making a memorandum of the circumstance.

"Yes, I remember the note from the doctor distinctly."

"I presume that you did not take the trouble to call upon the doctor in regard to the recommendation?"

The general looked surprised.

"No, certainly not!" he replied. "I was satisfied with the young man and would have taken him just as quickly without the doctor's recommendation as with it."

"But, really, Mr. Phenix, I do not see the object of this line of questioning," the general observed. "Is it your idea that the recommendation was a forged one?"

"Well, I don't know about that. I don't think I would go so far as to jump to that conclusion, but I am going to see Doctor Johnson in regard to the matter, for if the recommendation was a genuine one, I may be able to gain some important information from the doctor in regard to the young man."

"Yes, yes, very likely!" the general assented.

"That idea did not occur to me."

"And now about this clerk, Featherstone: do you know anything about him?"

"Oh, yes, I met the unfortunate wretch only last week."

"Last week, eh?"

"Yes, sir, I had some business in the neighborhood of the Brooklyn Bridge and as I passed along Park Row the fellow made bold to accost me. At first I did not recognize him for he has become a regular tramp."

"Gone to the bad?"

"Oh, yes, decidedly so! He told a pitiful story and I gave the man a quarter in order to get rid of him."

"It was near nightfall and the unfortunate wretch wanted in my enough to get him something to eat and a bed for the night."

"I presume I will be able to find the man by seeking him in the cheap lodging-houses," the veteran detective remarked, again taking notes in his memorandum-book.

"Egad! I can give you a pointer in regard to that!" the general exclaimed, abruptly.

"That is lucky."

"After I found out who the wretched-looking man was that had accosted me I remarked that I was very sorry to see him in such a condition, and hoped he would see the necessity of reforming."

"He smiled in a sarcastic way and replied that I ought not to preach reform to a man who was able to afford to live in a palace."

"I understand what he meant," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Well, I did not at the time, but as I was anxious to get rid of the poor wretch I did not press him for an explanation, but a half an hour later, when I rode up the Bowery on the L. road I saw that one of the cheap lodging-houses was called the Palace Hotel, so I came to the conclusion that he meant he had a room there."

"Yes, that was his meaning."

"And I presume that by going there you would probably find him."

"I will see what I can do," the veteran detective remarked.

"I think it will pay me to hunt the man up, for I may get some information out of him in regard to Lemaire which will prove valuable to me," Joe Phenix continued.

"Very likely."

"And now, general, I presume that as I have put the rascal to flight it will not be necessary to keep the watchers detailed to protect you on duty any longer."

"What is that?" the general exclaimed in amazement.

Joe Phenix repeated the speech.

"My dear Mr. Phenix, surely you are not displaying your usual good judgment when you make such a statement as that!" the general declared, evidently very much disturbed.

"But as the rascal has been forced to run away, doesn't it seem as if the danger was over?" Joe Phenix asked.

"Not at all!" the general exclaimed, very much excited.

"On the contrary it appears to me that the danger is increased. As I said before, this man is a moral monster. He has killed my partners without any reason, and there is not the least doubt in my mind that he will kill me if he possibly can. It is my opinion that the man is a homicidal lunatic, who, for some inexplicable reason has taken a hatred to me and my partners."

"Oh, no, my dear Mr. Phenix, you must not withdraw the guards; on the contrary increase them," the general continued, in a state of high excitement.

"Never mind the expense! What are a few hundred dollars compared to my life? Nothing at all! Hang the expense!"

Finding the general thus determined, Joe Phenix agreed to keep up the watch, but explained that he would make some changes in the arrangements, to which the other cheerfully assented.

Then the veteran detective departed.

"Now then for Bellevue Hospital and Doctor Johnson!" the man-hunter exclaimed.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE DOCTOR'S STORY.

It was the veteran detective's belief that when a man was after information, the quicker he set about getting it the better, and so that was why he made his way to Bellevue Hospital for the purpose of seeing Doctor Johnson as soon as possible.

Joe Phenix had a vast circle of acquaintances, as was but natural, considering the number of years he had been in the detective line, and few men of note were there in the metropolis whom he did not know, particularly men occupying official positions, but as it happened he had never met Doctor Johnson; but he did not anticipate that he would have any difficulty in obtaining the information he wished.

It was but seldom that the distinguished man-hunter visited any of the public buildings without meeting an old acquaintance in some of the officials, and on this occasion the first man he encountered was a gentleman to whom he had rendered a signal service some ten years before.

He was delighted to see Joe Phenix, and shook hands with him with as much warmth as though he had been a long-lost brother.

When the man-hunter explained the errand upon which he had come, the gentleman volunteered to see the doctor and tell him all about the matter.

"The doctor is a rather peculiar old gentleman," the official said. "And if he was not made to understand the particulars of the case in the beginning, he would not be apt to be particularly communicative, for he dislikes to be interviewed, and when any of the reporters attempt to get news out of him he is inclined to be wrathful."

"Well, a few of the gentlemen of the press are inclined to rather overdo the thing sometimes in their anxiety to steal a march on their professional brethren and get the news a little in advance."

"I do not think you will have any difficulty in getting the doctor to give you any information which he may possess," the gentleman remarked.

"When he comprehends that you are on the trail of a rascal and he can aid you to capture him, undoubtedly he will do all he can."

"But, as I said, he is odd and peculiar—a man really in advance of his time—and possessed of some very strange ideas; but there isn't

a doctor in the country who has a better knowledge of the science of medicine."

The official then asked the veteran detective to be seated while he sought the doctor.

In ten minutes he returned with the information that the doctor would be pleased to see the visitor.

Joe Phenix was then conducted to the doctor's private office, where he was introduced to the physician, who was a man of sixty or thereabouts, a small, dried-up kind of a human, with a nervous, irritable way.

The officer withdrew and the doctor begged the visitor to be seated while he examined him carefully with his deep-sunken gray eyes.

"I am pleased to make your acquaintance, sir," the old doctor remarked. "For you are not unknown to me by reputation, although this is the first time that I have ever had the pleasure of meeting you personally."

"I am still a student, Mr. Phenix," the old gentleman continued, with a smile. "And my chief study is man."

"We are in the same school, then," the man-hunter replied. "For my profession renders it necessary for me to study human nature all I can."

"Exactly! I can understand that, and it is a wonderfully interesting study, too, isn't it?"

"Yes; but rather complex."

"Very true—very true indeed; and the longer a man studies it the more he becomes convinced that the average life of a human is altogether too short to enable one to master the subject."

"Undoubtedly," Joe Phenix asserted. "And the longer a man pursues the theme the more earnest he becomes in regard to the matter."

"Yes, that is correct. But you wish some information from me. If I can give you any I shall be happy to do so, and you are quite welcome to question freely."

"I came to see about a young man who was pursuing his studies here about a year ago—a young man of French descent, I believe, as his name indicates, Jules Lemaire."

"Lemaire—Lemaire," the old gentleman observed, in a reflective way. "I do not remember any student who bore such a name."

"He stated that he had been studying here," the detective replied.

"It may be that my memory has played me a trick, but I do not think so," the doctor remarked.

"A look at the books will speedily settle the question though."

Then he made the investigation.

"No, I thought I would not forget a name so easily, for, as a rule, names stick to my memory pretty well," Doctor Johnson remarked.

"No student by the name of Lemaire has been in this institution within the last three years," the doctor declared, as he resumed his seat.

"Possibly he bore another name when he studied here," Joe Phenix suggested.

"Oh, yes, that may be true," the doctor assented.

"The man is a grand rascal, and after he left the hospital he may have changed his name."

"That is possible."

"I do not think there is a doubt that the man was a student here for he had a recommendation signed by you."

A look of surprise appeared on the doctor's countenance.

"A recommendation from me?"

"Yes."

"Oh, no!" the doctor exclaimed, in the most decided way. "That is not so, for I am not in the habit of giving such things."

"Then the recommendation was a forged one?" the veteran detective questioned.

"Most certainly it was if it purported to come from me," the doctor replied.

"For years I have made it a rule never to sign my name to anything of the kind," the physician continued.

"You see, Mr. Phenix, when I was a young man I once wrote a recommendation for a friend in whom I had every confidence," he explained. "The man turned out to be a rascal, and I was put to considerable trouble on account of indorsing him, so since that time I have made it a rule not to write a recommendation for any one."

"If I have a good opinion of a man, and circumstances arise so that a favorable word from me will be of service to him, and he is desirous that I will favor him, I always say 'send the party to me and I will be glad to tell them just what I think of you, but I prefer not to put it on paper. It is a mere whim of mine, of course, but I am an odd, peculiar fellow, and you must not mind my notions.'"

"But I say, what a strange thing that anybody should take the trouble to forge such a thing!" the doctor exclaimed, abruptly.

"The man was an applicant for a situation in a Wall street office, and although the members of the firm to whom he applied were well acquainted with him, and it is almost certain that they would have taken him without any recommendation, yet in his desire to get the position he thought it wise to present the recommendation, thinking, I suppose, it would insure his success."

"My goodness!" exclaimed the doctor in his quick, nervous way, "it seems to me that it was an extremely foolish thing to do! Suppose the parties had come to me—the fraud would have been immediately detected."

"Ah, yes, but it was his calculation that they would not take that trouble," Joe Phenix replied.

"Business men, you know, are sometimes very careless in regard to matters of this sort."

"His calculations were certainly correct for no one ever came near me about the affair."

"Yes, on the surface it looks as if the move had been an extremely successful one, but I fancy it will not be so in the end," Joe Phenix observed.

"Sometimes these extra shrewd fellows overreach themselves, and their own cunning leads to their undoing," the veteran detective observed.

"Oh, yes, there isn't any doubt about that," the doctor assented. "Just such cases have come under my observation."

"If it had not been for this forged paper I would not have thought of coming to you in regard to the man."

"But what information can I give you about him?" the doctor asked in amazement.

"It is my impression that the man was a student here; can you recall any one by the name Grandtete?"

"Yes, yes, there was a young man by that name, Victor Grandtete, and he did leave about a year ago."

Joe Phenix described the person of Lemaire.

"That is the man!" Doctor Johnston declared. "He studied here for about six months, and it was by my advice that he left, for I told him frankly that I did not think he would ever succeed as a doctor; you see I was satisfied he was not quite right in the upper story; there was something the matter with his head, and I was afraid that if he kept on he might go crazy."

"You made a study of the man, I see."

"Oh, yes, it has become a second nature to me," the doctor admitted. "I had a suspicion as soon as I became acquainted with him that there was something wrong in his head, and so when he told me he had an idea of giving up his studies to try a commercial life, I responded that in my opinion he had come to a wise decision for I did not believe he would ever stand the strain of a doctor's existence."

"Your judgment was correct; the man has become a homicidal maniac, and if I do not succeed in catching him there is not a doubt but what he will commit murder."

"I am not surprised, for I knew he was not right!" the doctor declared.

Joe Phenix did not deem it wise to enter into any further explanations, so he thanked the doctor and withdrew.

He had secured the information which he desired.

It was his suspicion that the tragedy of the Blue Eagle man was at the bottom of the horrid mystery, and now the suspicion was confirmed: Lemaire was the son of the man who had been killed in the fight for the mine.

CHAPTER XXX.

A WRETCHED MAN.

AFTER leaving the hospital Joe Phenix proceeded to the Bowery and took a car on the Elevated Road for down-town.

He got off at Chatham Square and walked up the Bowery, keeping his eyes open for the Palace Hotel.

Soon he came in sight of the place; it was one of the common cheap lodging-houses where the poor old homeless men of the great metropolis find scant accommodation.

Joe Phenix entered and accosted the man at the desk, a short-haired, bullet-headed fellow, who looked as if he would prove to be an extremely tough customer in a row.

In the cheap lodging-houses of the metropolis, the so-called hotels, it is absolutely necessary for the clerk to be of muscular build and able to give a good account of himself in a fight, for the class who patronize these cheap houses are addicted to coming in at night more or less under the influence of liquor, and as some of them are disposed to be extra ugly, the hotel clerk who was not able to act as a bouncer when called upon to do so would be apt to have a hard time of it.

The clerk looked at Joe Phenix in a suspicious way as he advanced.

Men of the detective's stamp were not common visitors in the Palace Hotel.

"I want to get a little information concerning a man called John Featherstone," Joe Phenix explained. "Do you know the party?"

"Well, I don't know," the clerk replied, in an evasive way, and then again he carefully surveyed the questioner, as though anxious to discover just what kind of a man he was.

"I do not mean to do the man any harm; on the contrary, I think I can put a few dollars in his way if he is the John Featherstone that I think he is," the veteran detective explained. "The man I want used to be a clerk with the Colorado Syndicate in Wall street, but I believe

he has had a hard run of luck lately, and so has got down considerably in the world."

"A rather oldish man—an Englishman?" the clerk asked.

"Yes, he answers to that description."

"I suppose it is English John that you want," the clerk observed in a reflective way.

"English John?"

"Yes, that is the name he is known by around here," the detective explained.

"The gang who hang out in this neighborhood don't go much on regular names, and almost every one of them has got some queer handle, and that is where English John comes in."

"Yes, I understand."

"And you want to see this bloke?" the clerk remarked in a reflective way.

"I do."

"Well, he is hanging round here now, for a week ago he got such a big cargo of lush on board that he couldn't climb the stairs, and so took a doorway down the street for a bunk, and the first policeman who came along gathered him in."

"And he was sent up to the 'Island' I suppose?"

"To the Hotel de Bam, on the side of Blackwell," the clerk sung.

"Much obliged for the information," Joe Phenix said as he turned to depart.

"Don't mention it!" the hotel man responded.

The man-hunter meditated over the situation as he descended the stairs.

"If this information is correct, and I do not doubt that it is, the chances are that I shall not have much trouble in getting the Englishman to talk," he soliloquized.

"There is a great difference between the homeless man, picking up a precarious living in the streets of the great city and well-soaked with liquor the majority of the time, and the same fellow on the Island, where he cannot get at any rum and so is compelled to keep sober."

The drunken tramp might be ugly enough to refuse to give information even if he possessed it, but the prisoner in the House of Correction will be pretty certain to be anxious to tell all he knows with the hope that I may be instrumental in procuring his release."

Of course, an old stager like the veteran man-hunter knew exactly how to go to work to secure a pass to Blackwell Island, where the House of Correction to which the outcasts of the great metropolis are sent is located.

And upon arriving on the Island, Joe Phenix was gratified at finding that the officer in charge of the department which he wished to visit was an old acquaintance—a man who was glad to assist the veteran detective in every way.

Joe Phenix was invited to a seat in the office, and then the prisoner, John Featherstone, was summoned.

And after the striped-suited man was ushered into the room the prison officers discreetly withdrew so that the veteran detective could have a private interview with the prisoner.

The Englishman was a man of fifty, but the life which he had led made him seem to be fully ten years older.

He was a broken-down man, and his lease of life was evidently short.

"I am a detective officer, and I have come to you to see if I can't secure a little information," Joe Phenix began.

"I am sure, sir, I will be glad to tell you anything if it is in my power so to do," the man said, evidently surprised.

"Take a chair, please, for our talk may take up some time."

The convict complied with the request.

"You were in the employ of the Colorado Syndicate, but were discharged on account of not attending to your duties."

"Yes, sir, I was weak and foolish, but I have been severely punished," the man replied in a tone full of bitterness.

"How was it that a man of your years and experience came to yield to temptation?—I do not ask this question out of any idle curiosity, I beg to say," Joe Phenix added, quickly. "But have a good reason for wishing to get at the truth of this matter, and if you will gratify my curiosity I may be able to secure your release from this place in return."

"I have a number of friends in New York who occupy prominent positions in the political world, men with pulls," the veteran detective explained. "And these parties can secure your release if they choose to exert their influence."

"I will be very much obliged, of course, although I don't know but what I am just about as well off here," he observed in a sad way.

"I have got so that I can't resist temptation, and if I am set at liberty the chances are great that I get to drinking again and so go right back to my old life," he continued.

"It will not do you any harm to make the trial," Joe Phenix suggested.

"That is true, and I will accept my release gladly enough."

"Now in regard to how I came to lose my position and become the wreck that I now am," the Englishman continued.

"In the first place I have drank and gambled in a quiet way for years, but as I was always careful to attend to business nobody suspected that I was addicted to such vices."

"But about a year ago I made the acquaintance of a young fellow who proved to be my evil genius."

"You are speaking of Jules Lemaire?" Joe Phenix said in his quiet way.

"Yes, that is the man," the convict replied, somewhat surprised.

"He succeeded to your place in the office?"

"He did, and the thought has often come to me that, maybe, he led me away just in order to get my place."

"Well, games of that kind have been worked," the man-hunter remarked.

"I am not saying, you know, that it was not a mighty easy thing for anybody to lead me astray," Featherstone admitted. "For I was always ready enough to go on a tear."

"Still if it had not been for this man I do not believe that my downfall would have come nearly as soon as it did."

"You are not aware, of course, that Lemaire has turned out to be a rascal, and is now a fugitive from justice?"

"Is it possible?" Featherstone exclaimed, greatly astonished.

"Yes, it is the truth, and that is why I have come to see you. I had an idea that I might be able to get some information from you which would help me to capture Lemaire."

The other shook his head.

"I don't really think I can help you," the convict said. "After I left the office I only met him a half a dozen times. At first I used to bone him for money, but finally, when he saw me coming, he would get out of the way."

"Then you are not posted in regard to his haunts?"

"No, he was always a closed-mouthed fellow, and I never questioned him."

"Hold on! I can give you a pointer!" the Englishman cried, abruptly.

"I did run across the man one night in a quarter where I was surprised to see him. I was with a gang on the west side of town, and we were laying round the upper end of Greenwich street in hopes to pick up some drinks, when Lemaire came along."

"He was on the opposite side of the street, and I had just made up my mind to go over and bone him for some money, when he went into a house, and from the way he let himself in with a latch-key, I got the idea that he lived in the house. I didn't inquire into the matter, for a cop came along just then and drove us away."

"How long ago was this?"

"A couple of weeks back, just before I was sent to the island."

Joe Phenix felt that he had succeeded in obtaining a most important clue.

"Whereabouts is this house?"

"Now you have got me!" the Englishman declared, with a dubious shake of the head.

"I was in liquor at the time, and I will be hanged if I can tell exactly where it was, but it was above Grand street, I think, and the house was on the right-hand side of the way, about three doors from the corner."

"It was an old-fashioned brick house, with solid green shutters."

"That is not a very definite description," the veteran man-hunter observed. "There are probably twenty houses in the upper part of the street which would answer to that description."

"Let me think a bit," the Englishman said, slowly. "My memory, you see, is not as good as it used to be, but perhaps I can recall something in the neighborhood which will help you to find the place."

"Do you suppose that if you were free you would be able to take me to the spot?" Joe Phenix asked.

"Well, I do not know," the other replied, with a doubtful shake of the head.

"You see it is just as I told you, I was half drunk at the time, and I am not sure that I could positively point out the house even if I saw it."

"I would like to get out of here well enough, but there is no use of my telling you that I can do a thing when I am not certain of it," the Englishman continued, in an honest way.

"Well, it seems to me that it would be worth while to make the trial," Joe Phenix remarked.

"I will give you the opportunity to see if you can point out the house to me, and if you do not succeed I will not complain."

"Thanks to certain friends of mine, who possess great political power, I can obtain your release without any trouble."

The Englishman thanked him gratefully, and promised to do the best he could.

Joe Phenix departed.

He had not magnified the influence he possessed, for within an hour he secured the Englishman's release, but he did not go for him until near evening, as the veteran detective was too cautious to prowl through the street where he thought his prey was located, in the daylight.

After the shades of night had fallen, though, he set out in company with Featherstone.

The Englishman's memory served him better

than he expected, for after making a careful inspection of the street, he pointed out a certain house to the man-hunter.

"This is the one he entered—I am sure of it!" he declared.

There was a card by the side of the door, which announced that furnished rooms could be had within.

"Thanks to you I may be able to nail my gentleman!" the man-hunter exclaimed.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A NEW DISGUISE.

AFTER Joe Phenix located the house he set to work to meditate over the best way to play the difficult game which was before him.

"The fellow is thoroughly on the alert now," he murmured. "And I must be careful not to make a false move so as to give him the alarm and cause him to skip before I have a chance to put the bracelets on him."

"I think I had better try to do this bit of shadowing myself," he continued. "For the game is now at such a ticklish stage that a single false move would ruin everything."

Having come to this conclusion the man-hunter hurried to his home as fast as possible.

On the way he speculated in regard to the best disguise for him to assume.

There was a German beer saloon directly opposite to the house on which he desired to keep watch, and he had made up his mind that the saloon would do nicely for a headquarters.

He had taken a look into the place and noticed that the proprietor was a jolly old Dutchman.

"I must get into my German professor shape and then concoct some plausible story so as to account for my presence in the neighborhood."

"As the circumstances of the case now are it is likely that the fellow will keep in-doors during the day, and only come forth at night; then, too, the chances are great that he will assume a disguise, for as he knows that by this time he is spotted he will feel sure that every policeman and detective in the city is on the watch to apprehend him."

"And now comes up another point," the veteran detective continued.

"The Englishman says that he saw him go into the house before he was sent to the Island; Lemaire was not disguised, of course, for if he had been Featherstone would not have known him."

"Now, then, if there is nothing out of the way about the people in the house—if they are honest folks, it would not be possible for him to assume a disguise without exciting their suspicion that there was something wrong."

"If the people are crooked, the game could be worked, though, without any trouble; so the first thing to do is to find out the particulars in regard to the inmates of the house."

By this time the detective had arrived at his own abode.

It did not take him long to assume his German professor disguise, and then he hurried back to Greenwich street as soon as possible.

As we have often said, in describing the adventures of this marvelous man-hunter, Joe Phenix would surely have made his fortune on the stage, for he possessed wonderful capabilities for assuming all sorts of characters, and was so true to nature in these assumptions that it would have puzzled the best judge of humanity that ever existed to detect that he was anything but what he appeared to be.

The veteran man-hunter was a great scholar as far as languages were concerned, speaking half a dozen as fluently as a native, and this aided him materially in playing his difficult parts.

The story he had resolved to tell was an extremely simple one.

He was a music-teacher by profession, had been located in Chicago for years, and now, as he was getting old, had made up his mind to take a trip to Germany to see his native land before he died, and a brother, who resided in Texas, was to make the trip with him, but when he arrived in New York he found a letter from his brother stating that, as he was detained by business he would not be able to go for two or three weeks, and as he—the professor—had determined to wait for him, he was obliged to look for accommodations.

Having this story all carefully prepared, the disguised detective rung the bell of the Greenwich street house.

A middle-aged man whose face indicated that he was of the German race came to the door, and after Joe Phenix got a good look at him he came to the conclusion that there wasn't anything crooked about the man, if he was any judge of character.

The pretended German inquired about the rooms, and the landlord, who spoke good English, with only just enough accent to betray that he was a foreigner, explained what he had.

Joe Phenix had set out to make a good impression, and he was such a perfect genius as an actor that he won the landlord's heart almost immediately.

The man only had one room, a hall bedroom on the first floor looking out on the street.

Joe Phenix examined the room, and then became confidential, telling his carefully concocted story to the landlord.

And the old German on his part felt called upon to explain how it was that he had rooms to let.

His health was so poor that he could not work at his trade, but his wife kept a stall in the market, and as they only had a small family there was two rooms in the house for which they had no use, the hall bedroom and the next front room on the same floor, which was rented to a most excellent young man, a "drummer" in the tobacco line, who had a route in the neighboring cities, so he was away from home the greater part of the time.

"Ah, yes, a young man came down the street as I came up, and I thought he came from this house," the disguised detective remarked, in his most innocent way.

"Oh, no, it was not our young man for he has gone out of town on his vacation," the landlord declared. "And his sister, who is studying to be a stenographer, a clerk, you understand, who writes short hand in an office, well, she has his room."

"Yes, yes, I comprehend," the disguised detective responded, quick to jump to a conclusion in regard to this "sister."

"A very nice, quiet girl, and she bears a striking resemblance to her brother," the landlord explained.

"And she studies so hard too," the landlord continued. "Studies all day long without ever going out."

"Ah, yes, some of these girls are hard workers."

"She has an oil-stove in her room upon which she gets her meals, and she never goes out until after dark, when she takes a long walk, so as to preserve her health."

"Yes, yes, good heavens! she must be careful not to study too hard or else she will ruin her health."

"She is a fine, big girl and looks to be strong," the landlord commented.

Having gained all the information he required the disguised detective did not pursue the subject any further, but engaged the room, and then departed, saying that he must get his valise from the hotel where he had been staying.

The landlord gave him a latch-key and explained that as the family usually retired a little after nine on account of the wife having to be up so early in the morning, he would not be able to get in if he came later than half-past nine without the key.

The disguised detective thanked the old German for his kindness and insisted upon his coming across the street and having a glass of beer.

The one glass multiplied into three and when the old German, the saloon-keeper and the disguised man-hunter parted they were as bosom friends.

Joe Phenix had taken the precaution to notify both Tony Western and the actress-detective to meet him at nine o'clock at the Hoboken ferry house at the foot of Christopher street, which was near the scene of action, in order to have a conference.

Tony Western had put on a common suit of clothes and with his well-worn "derby" cocked on the side of his head looked like one of the cheap sports who hang out in the neighborhood of pool-rooms, and similar places of resort, more or less disreputable.

Mignon Lemaire had on male attire, and in her curly, short-haired, black wig, with a face stained to an olive hue looked exactly like one of the young Cubans who are so often found in certain parts of the metropolis.

The three sat down in a secluded corner of the ferry-house, and then the disguised detective proceeded to explain the situation.

"Quite a clever dodge on the part of this chap," Tony Western remarked.

"By assuming woman's attire he fancied he would be able to baffle detection," the actress-detective observed.

"It was a remarkably smart move for him to make, and if I had not been lucky enough to hunt up the Englishman the chances are that it would have baffled me for a time," Joe Phenix declared.

"Yes, for New York is a big place, and to hunt for one particular man in the midst of a multitude is no small job, particularly when the man knows that he is 'wanted' and is doing his level best to keep out of the way," Tony Western suggested.

"We would have been certain to have got him in the long run, though," the actress-detective affirmed. "For just as soon as he fancied the affair had blown over he undoubtedly would have made an attack on the general, and if we were on the watch he could not escape us."

"Yes, that is true," Tony Western assented.

"You see this fellow has been leading two lives," Joe Phenix remarked.

"If suspicion had been directed to him, and his room on Tenth street was searched, nothing out of the way would be found there, for it was in his other apartment that he prepared his schemes."

"Yes, undoubtedly," Tony Western agreed.

"And now the question comes up, is it worth while to wait any longer?" Joe Phenix asked, in a meditative way.

"Will it not be wise to arrest the fellow at once, and trust to luck to find evidence enough in his room to prove that he is the man who committed these murders?"

"I should say so," Tony Western said.

"Arrest him at once!" the actress-detective declared.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CLOSING IN.

JOE PHENIX rose to his feet.

"I agree with you," he responded. "We cannot gain anything as far as I can see by delaying the arrest, and the quicker we nail the fellow the better."

"That is my opinion," Tony Western remarked.

"Mine also," coincided the actress-detective.

Joe Phenix consulted his watch.

It was a few minutes after ten, and when he announced the time he suggested that possibly it was rather early to make the attempt.

"The landlord said the young lady usually took a long walk in the evening," the detective continued. "And it is probable that the bird will not return to the room at so early an hour."

"Of course the idea of studying is merely a blind to account for keeping within doors during the day, but the fact is the fellow is afraid to venture out during the daylight for fear that his disguise will be detected."

"It was a bold move for him to assume a woman's garb," Tony Western remarked.

"Well, he is physically fitted by nature to play such a role," the veteran detective replied.

"He is a slightly built, effeminate looking fellow," Joe Phenix continued. "A smooth-faced chap, with hardly a sign of a beard, if I remember rightly, and as he is probably careful to wear a veil whenever he goes out, and never ventures abroad during the daytime, there is not much risk of his disguise being detected."

"He has played a bold game," the actress-detective suggested. "And as a rule a man who plays in that way stands a much better chance to win than if he is afraid of himself."

"Ah, yes, that is very true," Joe Phenix assented.

"Well, it will not do any harm to survey the ground," the man-hunter continued. "And if our bird is not in we can take post in my room and wait until he does come."

The other agreed that this was a good idea and so the three started.

There would not be any trouble about gaining admittance to the house for Joe Phenix had his latch-key, and as the inmates were all in bed no one would know how many came in.

When they arrived in front of the building the veteran detective cast a look up at the windows of the room occupied by the supposed young woman.

The curtains were down and all was dark.

"I think I was right in my conjecture about his not being at home," Joe Phenix remarked.

"But, as I said, we can wait for him."

Then he opened the door with his key and led the way to his apartment.

There was a light burning in the hall, and after he ushered his companion into his room the detective made an examination of the door of the adjoining apartment.

It was locked, and as there was no key visible, showing that it had been fastened from the inside, it was plain that the tenant was absent.

Joe Phenix reported this discovery to his associates, and then they all three sat down to wait, being careful to close the door of the apartment.

As the walls were thin they had no doubt that they would be able to hear the man for whom they waited as soon as he ascended the stairs.

"What do you suppose he is up to in these nightly prowls?" Tony Western asked.

"Probably seeking for a chance to get at the general," Joe Phenix replied.

"Unless I have made a great mistake in regard to the man he has a monomania on the subject, and almost all he thinks of is how to get a chance to kill the general."

"He certainly has acted as if he is affected in that way," the actress-detective assented.

"We will nail him to-night though, and so put an end to his bird's-eggging," the veteran detective observed in his grim way.

"And although I feel rather doubtful about obtaining proof enough to convict him," he continued, "Yet I do not think it wise to delay the arrest, for I do not see any chance of getting any better hold on him than I have at present, and it is possible that in the desperation of his madness the fellow may contrive to murder the general, in spite of all the precautions which I have taken to insure his safety."

"I think you are right," Tony Western agreed. "I do not believe it would be prudent to postpone the arrest."

"As you say, the proof against him is not very strong, but now that the man is so thor-

oughly on his guard, the chances, it seems to me, are great you will not be able to secure any more until the arrest is made."

"Exactly! in his room, or in his possession, we may strike something."

At this point the clang of the front door closing came distinctly to the ears of the three.

"Aha! do you hear that?" Joe Phenix asked. "Some one has entered the house, and I think the odds are great that it is our man."

Then the bloodhounds listened intently.

There was a small coal-oil lamp burning upon the table, but the veteran detective had taken the precaution to turn the wick down quite low, so the light would not attract attention from the outside.

The three listened with all their ears, as the saying is, and as all was still within the house, they could plainly hear the steps of the new-comer, and then came the rattle of a woman's dress in the entry.

The sound of a key being inserted in a lock, then the grating noise as the bolt was forced back, came clearly to the ears of the watchers.

They heard the door closed, and the sound of the key again turning in the lock, going to show that the new-comer had locked the door after entering the room.

Joe Phenix nodded to the others with a look of satisfaction, and they both smiled and nodded in return.

"I think that we had better wait for fifteen or twenty minutes, so as to give the fellow time to get ready for bad before we make an advance," the veteran detective observed.

The others nodded as a token that they considered this to be wise.

And so for a good twenty minutes the three waited.

Joe Phenix had consulted his watch when he made the suggestion, and when he thought that the twenty minutes had elapsed he again looked at it.

"It is time," he said in a low and cautious tone.

"Now then, it is our game to take him by surprise," he continued. "It is possible that by pretending to be the landlord I might induce the fellow to open the door, but I hardly think he would be dull enough to be tricked by any such game."

"No, he is too sharp a fellow," Tony Western agreed.

"Yes, and I think the best way will be to force in the door," the man-hunter remarked. "It is only a common lock, and a vigorous kick will undoubtedly do the business."

The others nodded assent.

"Come on then and have your revolvers handy for he may take it into his head to show fight."

Out into the entry stole the three with noiseless steps.

Joe Phenix put his ear to the key-hole and listened attentively for a few moments.

Not a sound could he hear from within the room to denote that the inmate had not retired to rest.

The veteran detective cast a glance at his companions in order to see if they were all ready and then, with a powerful kick, he essayed to burst in the door.

It was a stronger lock than he had calculated upon though, for although the force of the stroke started the door it needed another effort, and a second attack Joe Phenix made by throwing all his weight against the door.

It gave way beneath the shock and sprung open.

As the detective had anticipated Lemaire was within the room.

He had removed his female disguise, and now, clad only in his shirt and pantaloons, he tried to escape from his foes by means of the open window.

He sprang through the casement, halted for a moment and then leaped for the Elevated Railway track which ran along by the house.

It was a daring jump, but the fugitive was nerved to desperation by the situation.

He succeeded in gaining the track but slipped and fell, striking his head, partially stunning him, and then, before he could rise, one of the L road trains was on him, the engineer being unable to check his engine in time to avoid the slaughter.

From the window through which the fugitive had escaped the man-hunters, revolvers in hand, witnessed the tragedy.

Lemaire although terribly hurt was not killed outright, and by Joe Phenix's instructions was carried to a hospital, where he lingered in dreadful sufferings for two days before death put an end to his torture.

Before he died he sent for Joe Phenix and made a full confession.

The veteran detective was not surprised by the revelation, for, as the reader knows, the man-hunter had managed to arrive at the truth.

The young man was the son of the old Frenchman who had been killed in the Blue Eagle Mine fight.

The father was not quite right in his head, or else the tragedy would not have taken place, and the son's mind was also affected, and so he took upon himself the role of an avenger.

Our story is told.

The general was decidedly relieved when he learned that the mysterious foe was no more, and he paid the veteran detective with a liberal hand.

"You are the greatest detective in the world!" he declared.

And the speech was not far from the truth. Great had been the exploits of the man-hunter and his aids, but more triumphs were in store for this marvelous bloodhound, as the reader will see when we again tell the tale of the veteran detective's deeds.

THE END.

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478 Pinnacle Pete; or, The Fool from Way Back.
459 Major Sunshine, the Man of Three Lives.
429 Hair Trigger Tom of Red Bend.
402 Snapshot Sam; or, The Angels' Flat Racket.
396 The Piper Detective; or, The Gilt Edge Gang.
375 Royal George, the Three in One.
356 Three Handsome Sports; or, The Combination.
344 Double Shot Dave of the Left Hand.
333 Derringer Dick, the Man with the Drop.
300 A Sport in Spectacles; or, Bad Time at Bunco.
268 Magic Mike, the Man of Frills.
229 Captain Cutsleeve; or, The Little Sport.
214 The Two Cool Sports; or, Gertie of the Gulch.
192 The Lightning Sport.
182 Hands Up; or, The Knights of the Canyon.
160 Soft Hand, Sharp; or, The Man with the Sand.
145 Pistol Pards; or, The Silent Sport from Cinnabar.

BY CAPT. FRED. WHITTAKER.

- 614 The Showman Detective; or, The Mad Magician.
609 The Texas Tramp; or, Solid Saul.
445 Journeyman John, the Champion.
412 Larry Locke, the Man of Iron.
406 Old Pop Hicks, Showman.
378 John Armstrong, Mechanic.
326 The Whitest Man in the Mines.
310 The Marshal of Satanstown; or, The League.
303 Top-Notch Tom, the Cowboy Outlaw.
295 Old Cross-Eye, the Maverick-Hunter.
290 The Lost Corvette; or, Blakeley's Last Cruise.
284 The Three Frigates; or, Old Ironsides' Revenge.
277 The Saucy Jane, Privateer.
272 Seth Slocum, Railroad Surveyor.
265 Old Double-Sword; or, Pilots and Pirates.
253 A Yankee Cossack; or, The Queen of the Nihilists.
247 Alligator Ike; or, The Secret of the Everglade.
242 The Fog Devil; or, The Skipper of the Flash.
230 The Flying Dutchman of 1880.
225 The Mad Hussars; or, The O's and the Mac's.
215 Parson Jim, King of the Cowboys.
201 Colonel Plunger; or, The Unknown Sport.
200 One Eye, the Cannoneer.
193 The Man in Red; or, The Ghost of the Old Guard.
187 The Death's Head Cuirassiers.
174 The Phantom Knights.
159 Red Rudiger, the Archer.
132 Nemo, King of the Tramps.
115 The Severed Head; or, The Castle Coucy Secret.
103 The Duke of Diamonds.
98 The Rock Rider; or, The Spirit of the Sierra.
96 Double Death; or, The Spy of Wyoming.
69 The Irish Captain. A Tale of Fontenoy.
65 The Red Rajah; or, The Scourge of the Indies.
39 The Russian Spy; or, The Starry Cross Brothers.

BY GEORGE C. JENKS.

- 726 Fearless Sam, the Grand Combination Detective.
719 Boston Bob, the Sport Detective.
572 Jaunty Joe, the Jockey Detective.
554 Mad Sharp, the Rustler.
533 Rube Rocket, the Tent Detective.
526 Death-Grip, the Tenderfoot Detective.
507 The Drummer Detective.
432 The Giant Horseman.
393 Sleepless Eye, the Pacific Detective.

BY PHILIP S. WARNE.

- 583 Captain Adair, the Cattle King.
567 Captain Midnight, the Man of Craft.
544 The Back to Back Pards.
522 The Champion Three.
502 Bareback Buck, the Centaur of the Plains.
472 Six Foot Si; or, The Man to "Tie To."
431 California Kit, the Always on Hand.
404 Silver Sid; or, A "Daisy" Bluff.
380 Tiger Dick's Pledge; or, The Golden Serpent.
359 Yellow Jack, the Mestizo.
338 Jack Sands, the Boss of the Town.
299 Tree of a Kind; or, Dick, Despard and the Sport.
280 Tiger Dick's Lone Hand.
251 Tiger Dick vs. Iron Despard.
207 Old Hard Head; or, Whirlwind and his Mare.
171 Tiger Dick, the Man of the Iron Heart.
114 The Gentleman from Pike.
80 A Man of Nerve; or, Caliban the Dwarf.
54 Always on Hand; or, The Foot-Hills Sport.
29 Tiger Dick, Faro King; or, The Cashier's Crime.
4 The Kidnapper; or, The Northwest Shanghai.
1 A Hard Crowd; or, Gentleman Sam's Sister.

BY LEON LEWIS.

- 609 The Cowboy Couriers.
686 The On-the-Wing Detectives.
624 The Submarine Detective; or, The Water Ghouls.
484 Captain Ready, the Red Ransomer.
431 The Silent Detective; or, The Bogus Nephew.
456 The Demon Steer.
428 The Flying Glim; or, The Island Lure.

BY PROF. J. H. INGRAHAM.

- 316 Lafitte's Lieutenant; or, Child of the Sea.
314 Lafitte; or, The Pirate of the Gulf.
118 The Burglar Captain; or, The Fallen Star.
113 The Sea Slipper; or, The Freebooters.

BY DR. NOEL DUNBAR.

- 730 Duke Despard, the Gambler Duelist.
604 The Detective in Rags; or, The Grim Shadower.
500 The True-Heart Pards.

BY CAPTAIN HOWARD HOLMES.

- 724 Captain Hercules, the Strong Arm Detective.
711 Dan Damon, the Gilt-Edge Detective.
701 Silver Steve, the Branded Sport.
694 Gideon Grip, the Secret Shadower.
684 Velvet Van, the Mystery Shadower.
673 The Dude Desperado.
671 Jason Clew, the Silk-Handed Ferret.
664 Monk Morel, the Man-Hunter.
654 Sol Sphinx, the Ferret Detective.
642 Red Pard and Yellow.
603 Silent Sam, the Shadow Sphinx.
592 Captain Sid, the Shasta Ferret.
579 Old Cormorant, the Bowery Shadow.
559 Captain Cobra, the Hooded Mystery.
559 Danton, the Shadow Sharp.
550 Silk Hand, the Mohave Ferret.
543 The Magnate Detective.
532 Jac Javert, the Independent Detective.
523 Reynard of Red Jack; or, The Lost Detective.
512 Captain Velvet's Big Stake.
505 Phil Fox, the Gentle Spotter.
496 Richard Redfire, the Two Worlds' Detective.
487 Sunshine Sam, a Chip of the Old Block.
480 Hawkspare, the Man with a Secret.
48 Goldgrip in Deadwood.
460 Captain Goldgrip, the Detective.
453 Captain Goldgrip's Long Trail.
447 Volcano, the Frisco Spy.
441 The California Sharp.
434 Lucifer Lynx, the Wonder Detective.
421 Father Ferret, the Frisco Shadow.
413 Captain Goldgrip in New York.
407 Captain Goldgrip's Nerve; or, Injun Nick.
400 Captain Goldgrip; or, The New York Spotter.
392 The Lost Bonanza; or, The Boot of Silent Hound.
382 The Bonanza Band; or, Dread Don of Cool Clan.
374 Major Blister, the Sport of Two Cities.
365 Keen Kennard, the Shasta Shadow.
352 The Desperate Dozen.
347 Denver Duke, the Man with "Sand."
340 Cool Conrad, the Dakota Detective.
335 Flash Dan, the Nabob; or, Blades of Bowie Bar.
321 California Claude, the Lone Bandit.
294 Broadcloth Burt, the Denver Dandy.
278 Hercules Goldspur, the Man of the Velvet Hand.

BY WILLIAM H. MANNING.

- 714 Gabe Gall, the Gambler from Great Hump.
703 Spokane Saul, the Samaritan Suspect.
692 Dead-Shot Paul, the Deep-Range Explorer.
655 Strawberry Sam, the Man with the Birthmark.
646 Dark John, the Grim Guard.
638 Murdoch, the Dread Detective.
623 Dangerous Dave, the Never-Beaten Detective.
611 Alkali Abe, the Game Chicken from Texas.
596 Rustler Rube; the Round-Up Detective.
585 Dan Dixon's Double.
575 Steady Hand, the Napoleon of Detectives.
563 Wyoming Zeke, the Hotspur of Honeysuckle.
551 Garry Kean, the Man with Backbone.
539 Old Doubledark, the Wily Detective.
531 Saddle-Chief Kit, the Prairie Centaur.
521 Paradise Sam, the Nor'-West Pilot.
513 Texas Tartar, the Man with Nine Lives.
506 Uncle Honest, the Peacemaker of Hornets' Nest.
498 Central Pacific Paul, the Mail Train Spy.
492 Border Bullet, the Prairie Sharpshooter.
486 Kansas Kitten, the Northwest Detective.
479 Gladiator Gabe, the Samson of Sassajack.
470 The Duke of Dakota.
463 Gold Gauntlet, the Gulch Gladiator.
455 Yank Yellowbird, the Tall Hustler of the Hills.
449 Bluff Burke, King of the Rockies.
442 Wild West Walt, the Mountain Veteran.
437 Deep Duke; or, The Man of Two Lives.
427 The Rivals of Montana Mill.
415 Hot Heart, the Detective Spy.
403 Old Baldy, the Brigadier of Buck Basin.
385 Will Dick Turpin, the Leadville Lion.
297 Colorado Rube, the Strong Arm of Hotspur.
279 The Gold Dragon, or, California Bloodhound.

BY WM. G. PATTEN.

- 715 Double-Voice Dan on Deck.
702 Double-Voice Dan, the Always-on-Deck Detective.
696 Double-Voice Dan, the Go-it Alone Detective.
689 The Sparkler Sharp.
676 Hurricane Hal, the Cowboy Hotspur.
663 Old True Blue, the Trusty.
663 The Giant Sport; or, Sold to Satan.
656 Old Plug Ugly, the Rough and Ready.
648 Gold Glove Gid, the Man of Grit.
641 Aztec Jack, the Desert Nomad.
631 Colonel Cool, the Santa Fe Sharp.
602 Captain Nameless, the Mountain Mystery.
571 Old Dismal, the Range Detective.
545 Hustler Harry, the Cowboy Sport.

BY CAPTAIN MARK WILTON.

- 323 Hotspur Hugh; or, The Banded Brothers.
311 Heavy Hand; or, The Marked Men.
305 Silver-Plated Sol, the Montana Rover.
291 Horseshoe Hank, the Man of Big Luck.
285 Lightning Bolt, the Canyon Terror.
276 Texa Chick, the Southwest Detective.
271 Stonefist, of Big Nugget Bend.
266 Leopard Luke, the King of Horse-Thieves.
263 Iron-Armed Abe, the Hunchback Destroyer.
258 Bullet Head, the Colorado Bravo.
245 Barranca Bill, the Revolver Champion.
237 Long-Haired Max; or, The Black League.
227 Buckshot Ben, the Man-Hunter of Idaho.
223 Canyon Dave, the Man of the Mountain.
219 The Scorpion Brothers; or, Mad Tom's Mission.
202 Cactus Jack, the Giant Guide.
194 Don Sombra, the California Road Gent.
176 Lady Jaguar, the Robber Queen.

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- 734 Detective Burr's Feil.
728 Detective Burr, the Headquarters Special.
713 Detective Burr's Spirit Chase.
703 Detective Burr's Seven Clues.
698 Thad Burr, the Invincible.
690 The Matchless Detective.
680 XX, the Fatal Clew.

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- 657 Long Tom, the Privateer.
633 The Sea Spy.
621 The Red Privateer; or, The Midshipman Rover.
584 Fire Feather, the Buccaneer King.
517 Buffalo Bill's First Trail.
361 Tombstone Dick, the Train Pilot.
270 Andros, the Rover; or, The Pirate's Daughter.
122 Saul Sabberday, the Idiot Spy.
111 The Smuggler Captain; or, The Skipper's Crime.
61 Captain Seawaif, the Privateer.
23 The Red Warrior; or, The Comanche Lover.
18 The Sea Bandit; or, The Queen of the Isle.
16 The White Wizard; or, The Seminole Prophet.
14 Thayendanegea, the Scourge; or, The War-Eagle.

BY CAPTAIN MAYNE REID.

- 267 The White Squaw.
234 The Hunter's Feast.
228 The Maroon. A Tale of Voodoo and Obeah.
213 The Wild Huntress; or, The Squatter.
213 The War Trail; or, The Hunt of the Wild Horse.
208 The White Chief. A Romance of Mexico.
200 The Rifle Rangers; or, Adventures in Mexico.
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55 The Scalp Hunters. A Romance of the Plains.
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- 332 Spring-Head Jack; or, The Masked Mystery.
262 Fighting Tom, the Terror of the Toughs.
236 Champion Sam; or, The Monarchs of the Show.
169 Corporal Cannon, the Man of Forty Duels.
157 Mourad, the Mameluke; or, The Three Sword masters.
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143 The Czar's Spy; or, The Nihilist League.
126 The Demon Duelist; or, The League of Steel.
82 Iron Wrist, the Swordmaster.

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- 106 Shamus O'Brien, the Doud Boy of Glingal.
87 The Scarlet Captain; or, Prisoner of the Tower.
53 Silver Sam; or, The Mystery of Deadwood City.

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- 732 The Hurricane Detective.
643 Castlemaine, the Silent Sifter.
616 Magnus, the Weird Detective.
606 The Drop Detective.
595 Wellborn, the Upper Crust Detective.
582 Joram, the Detective Expert.
574 Old Falcon's Double.
561 The Thug King; or, The Falcon Detective's Foe.
548 Falconbridge, the Sphinx Detective.
536 Old Falcon's Foe; or, The Detective's Swell Job.
515 Short-Stop Maje, the Diamond Field Detective.
509 Old Falcon, the Thunderbolt Detective.
501 Springsteel Steve, the Retired Detective.
494 The Detective's Spy.
485 Rowlock, the Harbor Detective.
477 Dead-arm Brandt.
467 Mainwaring, the Salamander.
462 The Circus Detective.
451 Griplock, the Rocket Detective.
444 The Magic Detective; or, The Hidden Hand.
424 Hawk Heron's Deputy.
386 Hawk Heron, the Falcon Detective.

BY K. F. HILL.

- 721 Sam Saunders, the Go-As-You-Please Detective.
410 Sarah Brown, Detective.

BY CHARLES MORRIS.

- 589 Prince Hal, the Rattling Detective.
330 Cop Colt, the Quaker City Detective.

MISCELLANEOUS.

- 566 The Dauntless Detective; or, The Daughter Avenger. By Tom W. King.
542 The Ocean Drift; or, The Fight for Two Lives. By A. F. Holt.
534 Green Mountain Joe; or, The Counterfeiter's Cave. By Marmaduke Dey.
518 Royal Richard, the Thoroughbred. By J. W. Osbon.
366 The Telegraph Detective. By George H. Morse.
353 Bart Brennan; or, The King of Straight Flush. By John Cuthbert.
350 Flash Falcon, Society Detective. By W. J. Cobb.
312 Kinkfoot Karl, the Mountain Scourge. By Morris Redwing.
275 The Smuggler Cutter. By J. D. Conroy.
261 Black Sam, the Prairie Thunderbolt. By Col. Jo Yards.
190 The Three Guardsmen. By Alexander Dumas.
179 Conrad, the Convict. By Prof. Gildersleeve.
163 Owlet, the Robber Prince. By S. R. Urban.
155 The Doomed Dozen. By Dr. Frank Powell.
152 Captain Ironnerve, the Counterfeiter Chief.
146 The Doctor Detective. By George Lemuel.
144 The Hunchback of Notre Dame. By Victor Hugo.
140 The Three Spaniards. By Geo. Walker.
133 Rody the Rover. By William Carleton.
125 The Blacksmith Outlaw. By H. Ainsworth.
110 The Silent Rifleman. By H. W. Herbert.
102 The Masked Band. By George L. Aiken.
78 The Mysterious Spy. By Arthur M. Grainger.
76 The Queen's Musketeers. By George Albany.
68 The Fighting Trapper. By Capt. J. F. C. Adams.
60 Wide Awake, the Robber King. By F. Dumont.
32 B'hoys of Yale; or, The Scrapes of Collegians.
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560 The Man from Mexico.
553 Mark Monte, the Mutineer; or, The Branded Frigate.
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540 The Fleet Scourge; or, The Sea Wings of Salem.
530 The Savages of the Sea.
524 The Sea Chaser; or, The Pirate Noble.
516 Chatard, the Dead-Shot Duelist.
510 El Moro, the Corsair Commodore.
493 The Scouts of the Sea.
489 The Pirate Hunter; or, The Ocean Rivals.
482 Ocean Tramps; or, The Desperadoes of the Deep.
476 Bob Brent, the Buccaneer; or, the Red Sea Raider.
469 The Lieutenant Detective; or, the Fugitive Sailor.
457 The Sea Insurgent; or, The Conspirator Son.
446 Ocean Ogre, the Outcast Corsair.
435 The One-Armed Buccaneer.
430 The Fatal Frigate; or, Rivals in Love and War.
425 The Sea Sword; or, The Ocean Rivals.
418 The Sea Siren; or, The Fugitive Privateer.
399 The New Monte Cristo.
393 The Convict Captain.
388 The Giant Buccaneer; or, The Wrecker Witch.
377 Afloat and Ashore; or, The Corsair Conspirator.
373 Sailor of Fortune; or, The Barnegat Buccaneer.
369 The Coast Corsair; or, The Siren of the Sea.
364 The Sea Fugitive; or, The Queen of the Coast.
346 Ocean Guerrillas; or, Phantom Midshipman.
341 The Sea Desperado.
336 The Magic Ship; or, Sandy Hook Freebooters.
325 The Gentleman Pirate; or, The Casco Hermits.
318 The Indian Buccaneer; or, The Red Rovers.
307 The Phantom Pirate; or, The Water Wolves.
281 The Sea Owl; or, The Lady Captain of the Gulf.
259 Cutlass and Cross; or, the Ghouls of the Sea.
255 The Pirate Priest; or, The Gambler's Daughter.
246 Queen Helen, the Amazon of the Overland.
235 Red Lightning the Man of Chance.
231 The Kid Glove Miner; or, The Magic Doctor.
224 Black Beard, the Buccaneer.
220 The Specter Yacht; or, A Brother's Crime.
216 The Corsair Planter; or, Driven to Doom.
210 Buccaneer Bess, the Lioness of the Sea.
205 The Gambler Pirate; or, Lady of the Lagoon.
198 The Skeleton Schooner; or, The Skimmer.
184 The Ocean Vampire; or, The Castle Heiress.
181 The Scarlet Schooner; or, The Sea Nemesis.
177 Don Diablo, the Planter-Corsair.
172 Black Pirate; or, The Golden Fetters Mystery.
163 The Mad Mariner; or, Dishonored and Disowned.
155 The Corsair Queen; or, The Gypsies of the Sea.
147 Gold Spur, the Gentleman from Texas.
139 Fire Eye; or, The Bride of a Buccaneer.
134 Darkey Dan, the Colored Detective.
131 Buckskin Sam, the Texas Trail.
128 The Chevalier Corsair; or, The Heritage.
121 The Sea Cadet; or, The Rover of the Rigoletts.
116 Black Plume; or, The Sorceress of Hell Gate.
109 Captain Kyd, the King of the Black Flag.
104 Montezuma, the Merciless.
103 Merle, the Mutineer; or, The Red Anchor Brand.
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- 735 Buffalo Bill and His Merry Men.
731 Buffalo Bill's Beagles; or, Silk Lasso Sam.
727 Buffalo Bill's Body Guard.
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697 Buffalo Bill's Buckskin Brotherhood.
691 Buffalo Bill's Blind Trail; or, Mustang Madge.
667 Buffalo Bill's Swoop; or, The King of the Mines.
658 The Cowboy Clan; or, The Tigress of Texas.
653 Lasso King's League; or, Buck Taylor in Texas.
649 Buffalo Bill's Chief of Cowboys; or, Buck Taylor.
644 Buffalo Bill's Bonanza; or, Silver Circle Knights.
632 Buffalo Bill's Grip; or, Oath Bound to Custer.
629 Buffalo Bill's Pledge; or, The League of Three.
189 Wild Bill's Gold Trail; or, The Desperate Dozen.
175 Wild Bill's Trump Card; or, The Indian Heiress.
168 Wild Bill, the Pistol Dead Shot.

By Buffalo Bill.

- 630 The Gold King; or, Montebello, the Magnificent.
599 The Dead Shot Nine; or, My Pard of the Plains.
414 Red Renard, the Indian Detective.
401 One-Armed Pard; or, Borderland Retribution.
397 The Wizard Brothers; or, White Beaver's Trail.
394 White Beaver, the Exile of the Platte.
319 Wild Bill, the Whirlwind of the West.
304 Texas Jack, the Prairie Rattler.
243 The Pilgrim Sharp; or, The Soldier's Sweetheart.
83 Gold Bullet Sport; or, Knights of the Overland.
52 Death-Trail, the Chief of Scouts.

By Leon Lewis, Ned Buntline, etc.

- 682 Buffalo Bill's Secret Service Trail.
629 Buffalo Bill's Daring Role; or, Daredeath Dick.
517 Buffalo Bill's First Trail; or, The Express Rider.
153 Buffalo Bill, Chief of Scouts.
117 Buffalo Bill's Strange Pard; or, Dashing Dandy.
92 Buffalo Bill, the Buckskin King.

BY JOSEPH E. BADGER, JR.

- 720 The Secret Six; or, Old Halcyon.
712 The Man of Silk.
705 Bantam Bob, the Beauty from Butte.
693 Kent Kasson, the Preacher Sport.
683 Bob Breeze, the Rounder Detective.
675 Steel Surry, the Sport from Sunrise.
668 Solemn Saul's Luck Struck.
661 The Get-There Sharp.
651 Silvertip Steve, the Sky Scrapper from Siskiyou.
645 Gopher Gabe, the Unseen Detective.
636 Dandy Darling, Detective.
627 Mossback Mose, the Mountaineer.
617 The Grip Sack Sharp's Even up.
597 Big Bandy, the Brigadier from Brimstone Butte.
588 Sandy Sands, the Sharp from Snap City.
576 Silver-Tongued Sid; or, Grip Sack Sharp's Sweep.
564 The Grip-Sack Sharp; or, The Seraphs of Sodom.
555 Grip-Sack Sid, the Sample Sport.
547 The Buried Detective; or, Saul's Six Sensations.
541 Major Magnet, the Man of Nerve.
535 Dandy Dutch, the Decorator from Dead-Lift.
527 Dandy Andy, the Diamond Detective.
514 Gabe Guna, the Grizzly from Ginseng.
504 Solemn Saul, the Sad Man from San Saba.
495 Rattlepate Rob; or, The Roundhead's Reprisal.
488 The Thoroughbred Sport.
474 Daddy Dead-Eye, the Despot of Dew Drop.
466 Old Rough and Ready, the Sage of Sundown.
458 Dutch Dan, the Pilgrim from Spitzenberg.
450 The Rustler Detective.
443 A Cool Hand; or, Pistol Johnny's Picnic.
438 Oklahoma Nick.
433 Laughing Leo; or, Sam's Dandy Pard.
426 The Ghost Detective; or, The Secret Service Spy.
416 Monte Jim, the Black Sheep of Bismarck.
409 Rob Roy Ranch; or, The Imps of Pan Handle.
403 The Nameless Sport.
395 Deadly Aim, the Duke of Derringers.
387 Dirk Durg, the Ishmael of the Hills.
379 Howling Jonathan, the Terror from Headwaters.
372 Captain Crisp, the Man with a Record.
367 A Royal Flush; or, Dan Brown's Big Game.
360 Jumping Jerry, the Gamecock from Sundown.
355 Stormy Steve, the Mad Athlete.
351 Nor' West Nick, the Border Detective.
345 Masked Mark, the Mounted Detective.
339 Spread Eagle Sam, the Hercules Hide Hunter.
331 Chispa Charley, the Gold Nugget Sport.
324 Old Perked Lightning, the Solitary.
317 Frank Lightfoot, the Miner Detective.
303 Faro Saul, the Handsome Hercules.
292 Moke Horner, the Boss Roustabout.
286 Pistol Johnny; or, One Man in a Thousand.
283 Sleek Sam, the Devil of the Mines.
257 Death Trap Diggings; or, A Man 'Way Back.
249 Elephant Tom, of Durango.
241 Spitfire Saul, King of the Rustlers.
233 The Old Boy of Tombstone.
201 Pirate of the Placers; or, Joaquin's Death Hunt.
197 Revolver Rob; or, The Belle of Nugget Camp.
180 Old '49; or, The Amazon of Arizona.
170 Sweet William, the Trapper Detective.
165 Joaquin, the Terrible.
154 Joaquin, the Saddle King.
141 Equinox Tom, the Bully of Red Rock.
127 Sel Scott, the Masked Miner.
119 Alabama Joe; or, The Yazoo Man-Hunters.
105 Dan Brown of Denver; or, The Detective.
88 Big George; or, The Five Outlaw Brothers.
71 Captain Cool Blade; or, Mississippi Man Shark.
67 The Boy Jockey; or, Honesty vs. Crookedness.
64 Double-Sight, the Death Shot.
50 Jack Rabbit, the Prairie Sport.
47 Pacific Pete, the Prince of the Revolver.
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- 626 Ducats Dion, the Nabob Sport Detective.
612 Sheriff Stillwood, the Regulator of Raspberry.
598 The Dominie Detective.
591 Duke Daniels, the Society Detective.
580 Shadowing a Shadow.
565 Prince Paul, the Postman Detective.
557 The Mountain Graybeards; or, Riddles' Riddle.
519 Old Riddles, the Rocky Ranger.
499 Twilight Charlie, the Road Sport.
472 Gilbert of Gotham, the Steel-arm Detective.
453 Rainbow Rob, the Tulp from Texas.
436 Kentucky Jean, the Sport from Yellow Pine.
422 Blue Grass Burt, the Gold Star Detective.
390 The Giant Cupid; or, Cibuta John's Jubilee.

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- 723 Teamster Tom, the Boomer Detective.
709 Lodestone Lem, the Champion of Chestnut Burr.
695 Singer Sam, the Pilgrim Detective.
688 River Rustlers; or, the Detective from 'Way Back.
673 Stuttering Sam, the Whitest Sport of Santa Fe.
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- 448 Hark Kenton, the Traitor.
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